



CHARLES
COUNTY
Maryland

Land Preservation, Parks & Recreation Plan



Charles County, Maryland
2022

Approved June 28, 2022



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A. Purpose of the Plan

Parks, Recreation, and Tourism in Charles County strive to provide excellent quality of life opportunities and facilities for all. It is through the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) that county residents and visitors are able to enjoy indoor and outdoor spaces, as well as historical sites across the county. Serving as an advisory plan for the County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism divisions, the LPPRP is a requirement by the State of Maryland. The Charles County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan has been prepared to meet the state requirements so that the county will maintain their eligibility for Program Open Space Funding as well as serve as a foundation for a meaningful evaluation of the current county park, recreation, natural resources, land conservation, and agricultural preservation.

Mission Statement



"The Mission of Charles County Government is to provide our citizens the highest quality service possible in a timely, efficient, and courteous manner. To achieve this goal, our government must be operated in an open and accessible atmosphere, be based on comprehensive long and short-term planning, and have an appropriate managerial organization tempered by fiscal responsibility. We support and encourage efforts to grow a diverse workplace."



Vision Statement

"Charles County is a place where all people thrive, and businesses grow and prosper; where the preservation of our heritage and environment is paramount; where government services to its citizens are provided at the highest level of excellence; and where the quality of life is the best in the nation."



The Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan serves as an update and mechanism to analyze and track changes that have taken place in Charles County since the 2017 LPPRP plan. This document serves as an update to the 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan and serves two primary purposes:

- Maintains county eligibility to participate in Maryland’s Program Open Space matched grant funding that is used to supplement county funding for the improvement of parks and recreation assets.
- Serves as a key document by providing key information, goals and achievable recommendations that will guide Charles County in the management and enhancement of its public parks, open spaces, and preserved lands for the next five years.

The planning process utilized multiple methods to collect data, inventory existing conditions, engage the community and evaluate input, and gauge the overall level of service provided by public parks, open spaces, and recreation amenities in Charles County. Since the county last updated its Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan in 2017, natural resources conservation and agricultural land preservation goals and acreage of land preserved have changed minimally. Most updates to the Plan are noted in *Section II: Recreation, Parks, and Open Space*, which includes in-depth information and analysis of factors influencing Charles County’s provision of public parks and recreation services.

B. Planning Process Summary

The planning process, led by the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism, and BerryDunn, LLC, consisted of the following components:

- Strategic Kick Off
 - Review of existing plans, data, and materials
 - Studies of trends, demographics, and estimated local economic impacts of recreation
- Public, staff, and stakeholder engagement
- Open link (web based) survey
- GIS mapping and analysis
- Draft Plan preparation and review by County and State

Final Plan review and approvals by County and State. The tasks that provide the overall foundation for the LPPRP are outlined to the right.

Participation in the Planning Process:

- Staff Engagement
- 6 Focus Groups
- 2 Public Meetings
- 1092 Survey Responses

C. Key Challenges

In planning to meet existing and future public demand on the County's system of public parks, recreation facilities, historical sites, open spaces, and to best ensure County's ability to utilize Program Open Space funding as effectively as possible to meet goals identified in this Plan, the following two issues were identified as of critical significance.

Continue Use of Program Open Space to Enhance Public Recreation Opportunities

Charles County has utilized, and should continue to utilize, Program Open Space funds for regular improvements to County parks and recreation amenities, and strategic acquisition of land for future parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces. Program Open Space has supported 22 projects throughout Charles County from 2017 – 2022. A complete list of those projects can be found in *Section I*.

Additional recreation amenities at these sites will depend on further assistance from Program Open Space funding, and will significantly contribute to satisfying long-standing recreation and land conservation goals of the state and county.

Critical challenges identified throughout this process which led to the overall goals and recommendations should be strategized to by the following challenges.

Sustaining, Maintaining, and Exploring New Opportunities for Charles County Residents

With a strong diverse foundation, public participation in recreation and leisure opportunities should remain strong with public participation in various facilities and events. As the population of the county continues to grow, and the anticipated increase in tourism opportunities will increase the demand and usage of facilities and services managed by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. The county is positioned to provide substantial, sustainable, and targeted investment in infrastructure, staff, and program resources to best ensure the needs of the residents are being met now and into the future.

Enhancing Program Open Space funding for Public Recreation Opportunities

Charles County should continue to utilize Program Open Space funds for improvements to County parks and recreation amenities including the acquisition of land for future parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.





D. Goals and Recommendations

Goals of the 2022 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan focus on improving the County's provision of public parks and recreation amenities and initiatives to preserve lands of high agricultural and natural resource value.

Natural Resource Land Conservation and Agricultural Land Preservation Goals are identical to those of the County's current Comprehensive Plan. Goals for the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism were developed in response to needs identified through a level of service analysis. Additional goals and recommendations can be found in various sections of the overall plan.

Over 25,669 acres
of public parks, natural areas,
recreation facilities, and museums
provide diverse recreation
opportunities throughout Charles
County.

The County Should Seek to:

- Continue to improve and enhance service delivery, communication, and programming
- Continue to improve and enhance existing County facilities and amenities within the Department of Recreation, Parks, & Tourism
- Evaluate opportunities to develop new facilities and amenities
- Continue to improve organizational efficiencies

Section 1: Introduction and Planning Context

A. Purpose of this Plan

The Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan serves as an update and mechanism to analyze and track changes that have taken place in Charles County since the 2017 LPPRP plan. This document serves as an update to the 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan and serves two primary purposes:

1. Maintains county eligibility to participate in Maryland’s Program Open Space funding opportunity which is a significant source of annual matching grant funds used to supplement county funding and to improve local parks and recreation assets.
2. Provides key information, goals, and achievable recommendations to guide the county through the management and enhancement of its extensive system of public parks, open spaces, and preserved lands for the next five years.

Updating the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan on a five-year cycle is a prerequisite for County participation in Maryland’s Program Open Space Local-side Program (per *Section 5-905(b) (2) of the Natural Resources Article – Annotated Code of Maryland*). The Local-side Program provides annual grant funds that directly support land acquisitions for conservation and recreation, as well as assist in funding facility improvements to the County’s parks, recreation, and open space system. Every county in Maryland, and the City of Baltimore, participates in Program Open Space. Charles County has participated in Program Open since the program’s inception in 1969. Residents and visitors of Charles County have greatly benefitted from the recreation, parks, and open space services and amenities that were made possible in part by Program Open Space. The County has used these funds on 22 projects over the past five years, as summarized in *Table 1*.



Table 1: Program Open Space Budget Statistics for Charles County

Popes Creek Waterfront Phase I	\$731,000.00	2/7/2018
Turkey Hill Park - Dog Park Improvements	\$9,000.00	1/24/2018
Laurel Springs Concession Building Roof	\$18,750.00	1/24/2018
White Plains Tennis Courts Rehabilitation	\$60,000.00	3/7/2018
White Plains Golf Course Clubhouse Renovations	\$37,500.00	2/6/2019
White Plains Golf Course Clubhouse Renovations	\$75,000.00	4/18/2018
Port Tobacco River Park Phase II	\$61,500.00	8/22/2018
Laurel Springs Maintenance Building	\$37,500.00	10/3/2018
Chapel Point Park Improvements	\$270,000.00	10/31/2018
Chapel Point Park Improvements	\$405,000.00	5/22/2019
Gilbert Run Park Boardwalk Design	\$63,750.00	10/31/2018
Gilbert Run Park Playground Enhancement	\$18,750.00	10/31/2018
White Plains Park Playground Rehabilitation	\$75,000.00	10/31/2018
Charles County 2022 LPPRP	\$25,000.00	12/1/2021
Charles County 2022 LPPRP	\$25,000.00	1/29/2020
Charles County 2022 LPPRP	\$25,000.00	5/22/2019
Charles County 2022 LPPRP	\$25,000.00	3/24/2021
Waldorf Senior and Recreation Center - Additional Parking Acq.	\$300,200.00	6/19/2019
Gilbert Run Playground Revitalization	\$51,000.00	12/4/2019
Gilbert Run Playground Revitalization	\$12,000.00	4/21/2021
Laurel Springs Park Playground Revitalization	\$34,500.00	1/29/2020
Ruth B Swann Park Playground Revitalization	\$81,000.00	4/22/2020
Bensville Park Playground Revitalization	\$67,500.00	5/20/2020
Port Tobacco River Park - Jamieson Property Acq.	\$231,000.00	5/20/2020
Gilbert Run Park Boardwalk Replacement	\$324,750.00	4/21/2021
Waldorf Park Phase I & II Development	\$2,345,825.00	6/16/2021
Popes Creek Park - Gilligan's Pier Property Acquisition	\$1,791,875.00	12/1/2021
Total Program Open Space Projects 2018-2022	\$7,202,400.00	

Charles County relies on annual grant funding from Program Open Space for open space land acquisition and parks and recreation facility improvements. Completion of a regular five-year update to the County's Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan is a prerequisite for the County's continued participation in the Local side Program (per *Section 5-905[b][2] of the Natural Resources Article- Annotated Code of Maryland*). This update to the County's Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, once adopted by the Board of Commissioners in 2022, shall replace the previous version approved in 2017.

As with previous versions of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, this document provides updated information on programs, goals, and issues impacting Charles County's provision of public parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.

The 2022 update has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of:

- State of Maryland 2022 “Statewide Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan Guidelines”
- State of Maryland Program Open Space statutory requirements

Relationship to the Comprehensive Plan, and Other County and State Plans

Upon adoption by the County Commission, this updated Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan becomes a part of



the County’s current 2016 “Comprehensive Plan” by reference. Adoption of this updated plan is anticipated by July 2022, and upon adoption,

it will replace the 2017 “Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan” as the detailed guiding document for parks, open space, and recreation planning in the County for the next five years. The goals and recommendations of the 2022 “Charles County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan” are supportive of County and State plans, programs, and shared goals including those established by:

Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan focus areas:

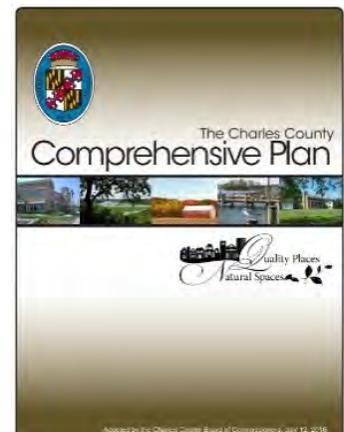
1. Parks, Recreation, and Tourism
2. Natural Resource Land Conservation
3. Agricultural Land Preservation

State:

- Maryland Program Open Space
- GreenPrint
- Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation Program
- Maryland 20-Year Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
- Maryland 2017 Statewide Land Preservation and Recreation Plan
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources – Fiscal Year 2020 DNR Lands Acreage Report
- Maryland Department of Natural Resources – LPPRP Guidelines and Resource Documents
- Maryland Department of Planning – State Data Center
- Maryland Department of Planning – Protected Lands Reporting Site
- Maryland Department of Agriculture – MALPF Program
- Maryland Department of Transportation – 2019 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan Update

County:

- 2016 Charles County Comprehensive Plan
- 2012 Tourism Destination Study Plan
- 2012 Bicycle and Pedestrian Master Plan
- Various Land Use Plans and Studies



B. Planning Process and Community Engagement

Preparation of the 2022 Charles County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan was led by the County’s Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism, and BerryDunn, with input and assistance of staff from the Department of Planning and Growth Management. Straughan Environmental lead the Natural Resources Land Conservation, and Agricultural Land Preservation sections of the plan.

Below is a table listing of the overall LPPRP process along with tasks and dates included. A project with the magnitude of scope represented here presents sound community involvement along with goals and objectives clearly stated as outlined in the State’s LPPRP process.

Table 2: Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Schedule & Process

Strategic Kick-Off & Determination of Critical Success Factors <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project Coordination • Document Collection/Integration of Existing Plans • Determination of Critical Success Factors/Performance Measures 	<i>August 2021</i>
Community Profile & Engagement Integration with Survey <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial Information Gathering • Focus Groups/Staff/Stakeholder Interviews • Community Wide Public Meeting • Pop-Up Events • Needs Assessment/Statistically Valid Survey 	<i>October-December 2021</i>
Resource Inventory, Site Assessment & Mapping <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inventory and Level of Service Analysis • GIS mapping and analysis • Assessment of Existing Standards • Demographics, Trends and Community Profile • Organizational/Program Analysis 	<i>October-December 2021</i>
Findings & Visioning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key Issues Analysis Matrix • Visioning Strategies Workshop 	<i>January 2022</i>
Financial Analysis <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Action Plan/Recommendations 	<i>January 2021</i>
Draft Plan, Action Plan, & Presentation	<i>February 2021</i>
Final Plan, Presentation, and Deliverables	<i>June, 2022</i>

Review of Guiding Plans, Programs, and Information

The planning process began with a review of existing County and State plans, programs, and resources



relevant to the provision of public parks, recreation, and open space in Charles County. Current guiding documents, plans, and data sources considered during the update of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan included, and were not limited to:

- 2016 Charles County Comprehensive Plan
- County 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan
- 2022 LPPRP Guidelines
- Comprehensive Economic Development Study
- Tourism and Hospitality Master Plan
- County Recreation and Parks Program Guides and Enrollment Data
- Maryland Land Preservation and Recreation Plan
- Maryland Dept. of Planning – Protected Lands Reporting Site
- Maryland Dept. of Agriculture – MALPF Program

Staff, Stakeholder, and Public Participation

Ideas, information, and perceptions of the current parks, recreation, and open space assets and programs managed by the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism were collected through a series of staff and stakeholder focus group meetings, representing the points of view of different parks and recreation system service providers and user groups including youth and adult sports, cultural and historical groups, and open space advocates. In addition to these meetings, an online survey, open for all to participate, hosted by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism from November 1 – 4, 2021. There were over 60 participants that participated in the meetings.

Summary of Staff Participation

County staff recognized the tremendous value that parks, recreation facilities and programs, and protected open spaces provided for residents and visitors of Charles County. Staff contributed to the update of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan with expertise on issues that impact the provision and management of public lands and facilities. County departments and agencies that participated in this planning process included the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism; the Department of Planning and Growth Management; County Administration; the Department of Community Services Aging and Senior Programs, and others.

Summary of Stakeholder Engagement

Ten stakeholder meetings and six focus groups were hosted between November 1 – 4, 2021. For the purposes of this Plan, stakeholders were public and private organizations, institutions, and individuals with direct ties to, and interests in, the County’s system of public parks, recreation amenities, and open spaces. Stakeholders invited to participate generally included representatives of sports programs and leagues that utilize, or would like to utilize, County fields; participants in, and providers of, outdoor recreation and natural resource-based sports and leisure activities; museums, cultural, and historical amenity providers, and preservationists; and those involved with indoor sports, recreation, and leisure activities. Of those invited, a total of 50 individuals participated, representing a variety of sports leagues, clubs, and groups, as well as historical, cultural interests, and land conservation groups.

Public Participation – Public Meetings and Needs Assessment Survey

Members of the community were notified that a public meeting would follow the focus group meetings



to present the findings and receive feedback from the public. That meeting was held on November 4, 2021. In addition to this public meeting, a second public meeting was held on February 2, 2022. The draft plan will be reviewed with the Commissioners of Charles County following review from the State.

To allow for easy public participation in the planning process, a statistically valid survey and open link, (online survey), were hosted through RRC Associates. The survey included 29 questions focused on gauging respondents' usage, visitation of County parks and recreation sites, perception of amenities, quality, accessibility, satisfaction, and how they believe public investment should be leveraged to improve the quality of the County's system of parks, recreation facilities, and open space assets.

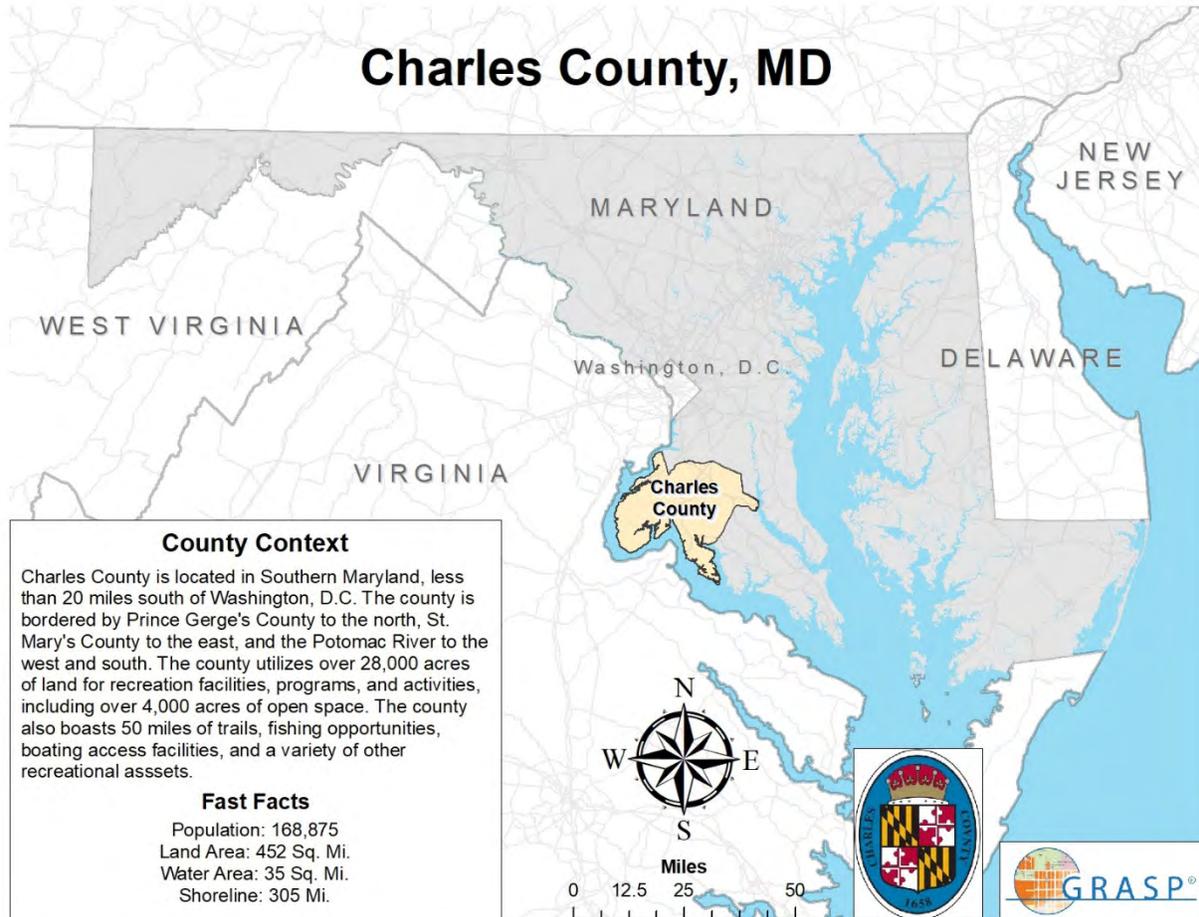
The results of the Needs Assessment results captured 1092 responses and key findings that are discussed in *Section II: Parks, Recreation, and Tourism* with a full reporting of findings included in *Appendix F: Needs Assessment Survey Summary Report*.

C. County Character

Geographic Character

Charles County is approximately 457.75 square miles in land area and located in southern Maryland, less than 20 miles south of Washington D.C. As illustrated in *Map 1*, the County is bordered to the north by Prince George's County, St. Mary's County to the east, and the Potomac River to the west and south.

Map 1: County Context



Source: BerryDunn

Demographic Highlights

As illustrated in *Figure 1*, data from ESRI and Maryland Department of Planning indicate that Charles County has been experiencing steady population growth, with that trend projected to continue through at least 2030 and onward there will be an anticipated .89% compound annual growth rate by 2030. The 2020 US Census listed the population of Charles County at 166,617 and *Figure 1* represents that change.

Figure 1: Projected Population Growth in Charles County, 2000 - 2030

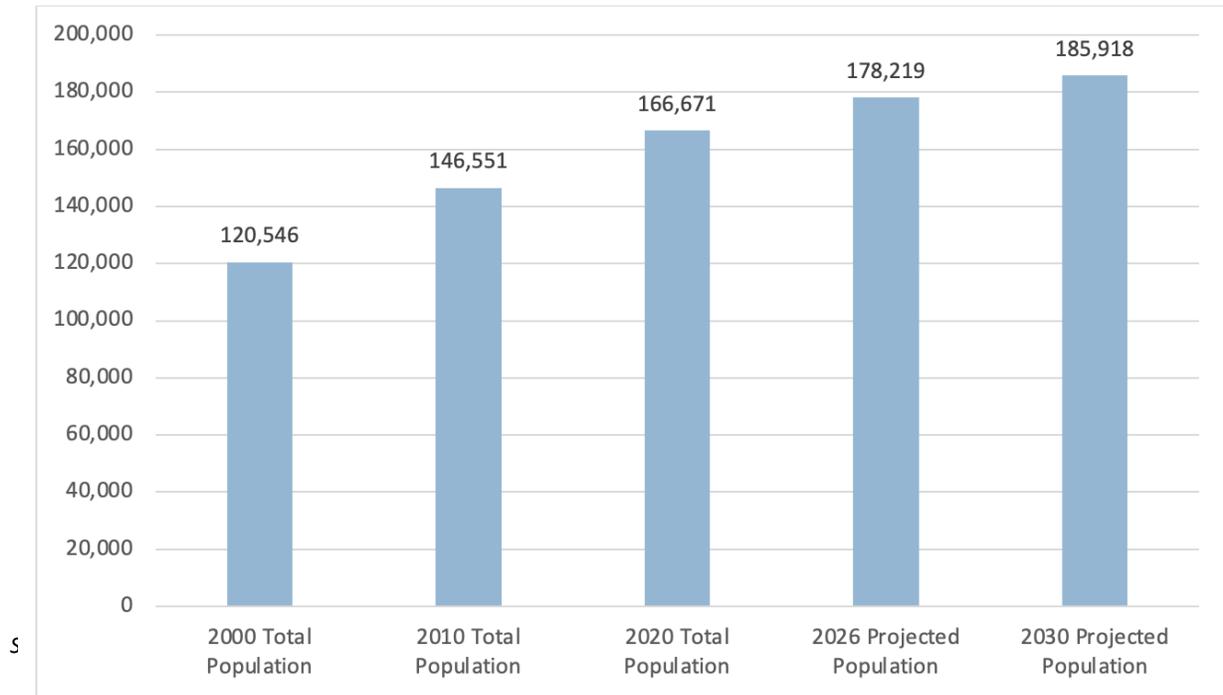


Figure 2 summarizes several key general demographic traits of the County’s population. The 2022 median age of Charles County residents was in line with that of the statewide and national populations. Median household income in Charles County in 2019 was estimated to be \$103,678.

Figure 2: Key Demographics

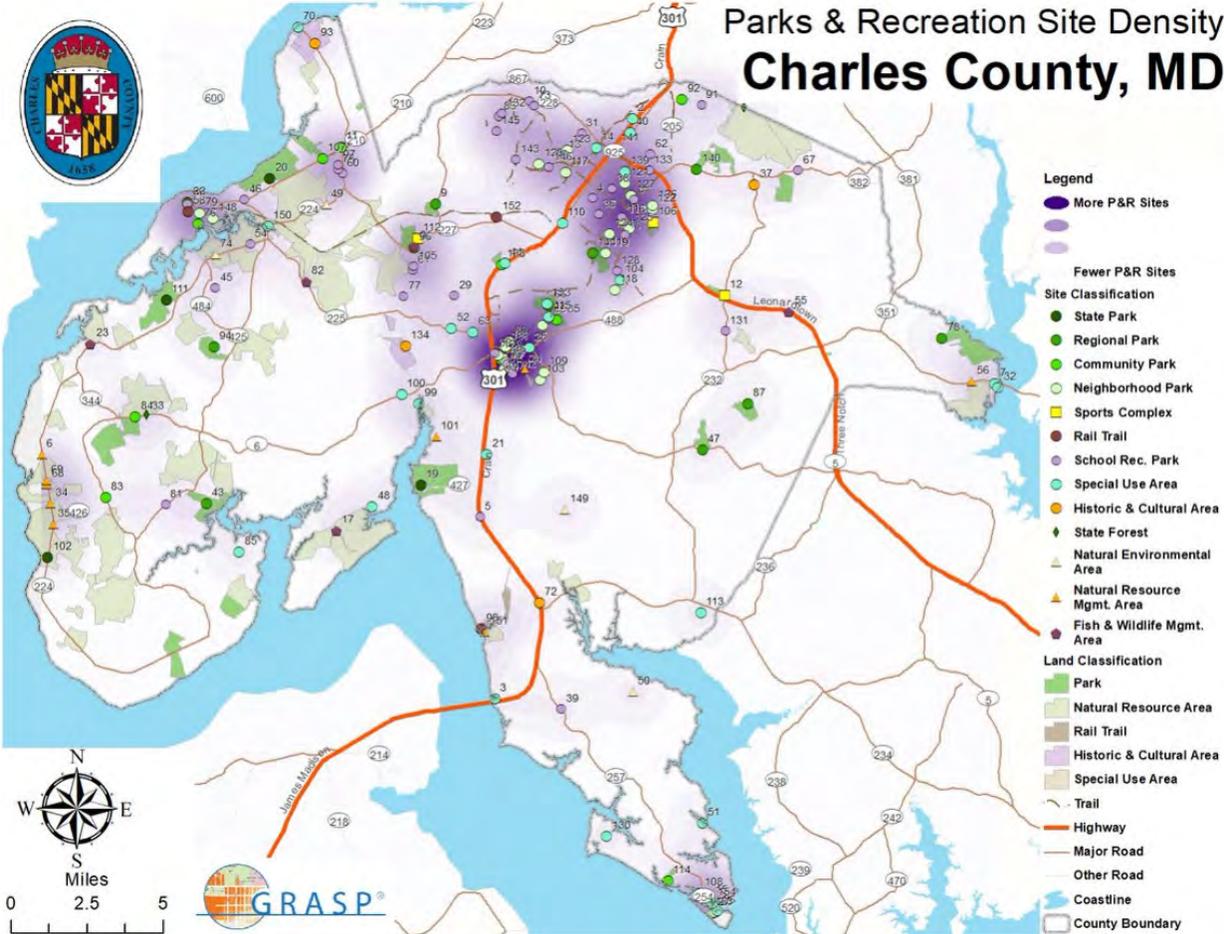


Figure 3: Race and Ethnic Comparisons for Total Population in Charles County



As illustrated by the red highlighted areas on *Map 2*, the most densely populated area of the County is in and around Waldorf, followed by the La Plata area. Population density throughout the rest of the County was less dense.

Map 2: Parks and Recreation Site Density



Completed as a component of the updated to the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, *Appendix B* provides a full report on county demographic trends that tend to influence the provision of public parks and recreation services in Charles County.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

In fiscal year 2020, Charles County Government made a commitment to advance diversity, equity and inclusion throughout local government and its associated organizations, policies, and practices. To achieve this important objective, a cohort of executive and senior leaders (including representation from the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism) was selected by County Administration to participate in a regional training initiative, hosted by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG), known as GARE, the Government Alliance on Race and Equity.¹

In September 2019, the Charles County cohort began meeting monthly along with 10 other government jurisdictions in the greater metropolitan area with the goal of addressing concerns about structural and institutional inequities and working collaboratively to establish more equitable policies and practices for the benefit of every resident in the region. Over the past year, the Charles County cohort gained valuable insight about the root causes of inequality and learned to apply a Racial Equity Toolkit to reimagine, design, and implement more equitable policies and practices in local government services. The goal is to move from transactional approaches focused on individual equity, toward transformative approaches which cut across multiple institutions and policies. Transformative approaches seek to address root causes of inequity and develop meaningful and enduring improvements not merely for individuals, but to change entire systems, organizational structures, and cultures. The result of such efforts is enduring equity for all Charles County residents.¹

Prior to the onset of COVID-19 in 2020, the county GARE cohort identified two transformational projects to apply the Racial Equity Toolkit, which were extending transportation and broadband access.¹ In 2022, the GARE cohort started working specifically with the Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism to further assess diversity, equity and inclusion through analysis and increased collection of user data, along with a comprehensive inventory analysis by zip codes within the county. Specific data will include: participant demographics, affordability of programs, access to parks and recreation facilities, and therapeutic recreation opportunities.

The Park Equity mapping results are found in *Section II - Parks, Recreation, and Tourism* where demographic and environmental health data from a variety of sources and maps. This data can be found on the Maryland census block grouping and identifies disparities in park access and quality. For more detailed information on the Maryland Park Equity Mapper, you can visit the State of Maryland's Department of Natural Resources website at [Maryland Park Equity Mapper Interactive Tool](#).



1 Charles County Government Annual Report 2020

Section 2: Parks, Recreation, and Tourism

A. Section Summary

The existing system of public parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces in Charles County, as illustrated in *Map 2* in the previous section, includes lands and facilities that provide a wide range of opportunities for public participation in recreation, cultural, fitness, and leisure activities. This infrastructure supports the high quality of life and the rural charm actively sought out by residents and visitors of Charles County. A variety of public and quasi-public properties are provided the public with access to recreation facilities, programs, and activities. Over 24,000 acres, or roughly 87% of all public and private lands in the County that served public recreation functions, were managed by the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources and Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.

As of January 2022, Charles County's system of public parks and open space lands consisted of the following.

- **Total Public and Quasi-Public Lands: 28,314 acres**
 - **Quasi-Public Recreation Lands: 3,796 acres**
 - **County, State, and Federal: 24,169 acres**
 - **County and Municipal Lands: 4,655 acres**
 - **State and Federal Lands: 19,514 acres**

The system of public parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces in Charles County supported a wide variety of benefits and services directly linked to the high quality of life of residents. The natural landscapes and ecological systems preserved on public lands support biodiversity, serve to mitigate flooding and impacts of climate change, and filter drinking water, and rivers flow into the Chesapeake Bay. The trails, sports fields, boat launches, and other public recreation amenities distributed throughout the County provide opportunities for thousands of people to engage with nature; run, play, and stay fit; and enjoy activities known to be beneficial for public health, personal well-being, and local economies.

B. Existing System of Public Parks and Recreation Amenities

The County's strong and long-standing pro-land conservation philosophy has led to the development of a robust existing system of public parks, forests, and other open space lands that provide abundant opportunities for public participation in a wide variety of recreation, fitness, and leisure activities. In 2022, most of the land, facilities, and programs available for public recreational use in Charles County were managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and the County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. Other recreation service providers supplemented these opportunities, including the National Park Service, cultural and historic preservation organizations, and private businesses. Private developments in Charles County also play an important role in providing the public with access to the shoreline and water-based recreation opportunities.

In addition to parks and other traditional recreation amenities, Charles County is rich with cultural and historic resources that provide the public with opportunities for self-directed enjoyment and engagement. These sites designated historic and arts districts, and associated stories are attractions that draw locals and visitors to explore the county's area, culture, and landscape.



County Arts, Entertainment, and Historical Assets

Culture and history thrive in Charles County. Residents and a growing tourist base are attracted to the County's historic assets, cultural opportunities, arts offerings, and the recreational opportunities they afford. Many of these assets are privately owned and operated, and open to the public for a fee. Several popular arts, cultural, and historical attractions in Charles County are noted below. Additional information about these resources is available online.

Mattawoman Creek Art Center

The Mattawoman Creek Art Center (MCAC) encourages the practice and appreciation of the visual arts in the Southern Maryland community by maintaining and operating a permanent facility to provide exhibition and studio/workshop space for working artists. The MCAC presents regional, national, and international art exhibits and provides space for civic and social events in a setting enhanced by art. They provide programming workshops, lectures, demonstrations, films, and seminars with professional artists for participants of all ages, levels of experience, and artistic involvement.

Port Tobacco Players

The Port Tobacco Players Theater, located in the heart of downtown La Plata, provides entertainment through consistent quality productions. The group puts on multiple shows throughout the year and provides programming and classes for youth and adults.

Black Box Theater – Indian Head Center for the Arts

The Black Box Theater is a 90-seat theater that provides a unique professional venue for a variety of performing arts programs such as musical and dramatic performances, recitals, exhibits, literary readings, seminars, and theater workshops, to name a few.

Port Tobacco Historic Village

Settled in 1634, Port Tobacco was once Maryland's second largest seaport and was listed on early world maps. The town served as the seat of Charles County from 1727-1895, but its history extends from the prehistoric Native American inhabitants of Potopaco to the current residents of the town. Visitors will learn more about the facts and legends of Historic Port Tobacco Village and can explore on their own or take a guided tour. The tours include the Port Tobacco Courthouse, Stagg Hall, and Burch House.

Rich Hill

Visitors can see the exterior of the historic house and read from interpretive panels about the owners and history of Rich Hill. Rich Hill was the birthplace and childhood home of Margaret Brown and her brother Gustavus Brown. Margaret Brown grew up to marry Thomas Stone, one of our founding fathers and a signer of the Declaration of Independence. Dr. Gustavus Brown went on to be one of President George Washington's physicians and tended to the "Father of our Country" on his deathbed.

Rich Hill plays an important role in the escape and manhunt of Lincoln's assassin. In 1865, Abraham Lincoln's assassin, John Wilkes Booth, and his accomplice, David Herold, sought food and shelter at Rich Hill after they left the home of Dr. Samuel Mudd. Booth and Herold were given a meal at Rich Hill and were further assisted by the owner, Samuel Cox, who ordered his foster brother, Thomas Jones, to care for the fugitives as they hid in a nearby pine thicket.

Village of Benedict

First settled as a colonial port town in 1706, the waterfront village of Benedict is in far-eastern Charles County along a narrow peninsula bordering the Patuxent River and Indian Creek. Benedict has a storied past as the site of the British land invasion during the War of 1812, the site of Camp Stanton, a Union training camp for African Americans during the Civil War, and a rich maritime history spanning three centuries.

Today, the village of Benedict consists of 150 acres and includes residential areas as well as marinas and restaurants, a post office, firehouse, and a Catholic church. Because of its strong historic themes, regional location, and abundant waterfront, in 2012, Charles County completed the Benedict Waterfront Village Revitalization Plan, a community-based vision for the future of Benedict that includes improved water access and amenities, infill and redevelopment opportunities, and planned sewer service improvements.

Dr. Mudd House Museum

After breaking his leg during the assassination of President Lincoln at Ford’s Theatre in Washington, D.C., on Good Friday, April 14, 1865, John Wilkes Booth sought medical attention from Dr. Mudd. Accompanied on horseback by David Herold, Booth arrived at Dr. Mudd’s home at 4 a.m., April 15th. Dr. Mudd splinted the broken limb and let the travelers rest for several hours in an upstairs bedroom before they continued their journey later that afternoon. Tours of the property and museum are provided April through November by the Dr. Mudd Society.

Parks, Amenities, and Recreation Opportunities provided by the Federal Government

The federal government manages several sites in Charles County that provide the public with opportunities to recreate, learn about the history and culture of the area, and enjoy and experience nature. The National Park Service and Bureau of Land Management are the primary agencies responsible for the management of the following federal properties in the County:

- Charlie Wright Park
- Douglas Point Property
- Marshall Hall Boat Launch
- Piscataway Park
- Thomas Stone National Historic Site



Charles County actively works in partnership with these federal service providers to maintain and operate Charlie Wright Park, and to operate boat launching facilities at Piscataway Park, and Marshall Hall.

These sites provided unique opportunities for visitors to experience scenic landscapes, participate in outdoor recreation opportunities, and learn about historic resources of national significance. For example, the 390-acre Thomas Stone National Historic Site preserved the rural homestead of Thomas Stone, a significant figure in the Revolutionary War and signatory of the Declaration of Independence. At the site, admission is free, and visitors can participate in ranger-led historic tours of the Thomas Stone House, experience the rural landscape of the site on their own, and learn more about relevant history through exhibits at the Site’s visitor’s center. The Site also annually hosts popular Christmas and 4th of July events.

The federal government also managed and promoted several regional historic trails and driving routes that wind through Charles County. These routes stitch together sites related to historical events of national significance that occurred in the area. Each trail has a unique theme, and all were located within the National Park Service’s Chesapeake Bay Gateways and Water Trails Network.

- Captain John Smith Chesapeake National Historic Trail
 - Land and water routes along the Potomac River and Chesapeake Bay explored by Captain John Smith are linked together throughout the region. Key sites in Charles County include Mallow’s Bay Park, Nanjemoy Wildlife Management Area and Smallwood State Park.
- Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail
 - The Southern Maryland Potomac Heritage Trail Bicycling Route, part of the Potomac Heritage National Scenic Trail network meanders through Charles County and links together routes explored by George Washington.
- Religious Freedom National Scenic Byway
 - Links together sites significant to introduction of the concepts of religious tolerance and separation of church and state in the American Colonies.
- Star-Spangled Banner National Historic Trail
 - Links together sites in the Chesapeake Bay and Potomac River region significant to the War of 1812.

Figure 4: Thomas Stone National Historic Site



Image Credit: National Park Service
<https://www.nps.gov/thst/index.htm>



Mallow’s Bay –A National Marine Sanctuary

Located on the Potomac River, 30 miles south of Washington D.C. Mallow’s bay is renowned for its diverse collection of historic shipwrecks, recreational opportunities, and scenic beauty. Local efforts within Charles County led to the success of this historical site being listed as the first National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration National Marine Sanctuary in the state of Maryland. The Bay is best known as the home of the “ghost fleet” of over 100 scuttled World War I era transport ships that never saw service. Over 200 total wrecks have been identified in and around Mallow’s Bay. Over time, the remains have provided important habitat structure. These unique marine resources and the high natural resource value of the adjacent preserved lands make the Mallow’s Bay area of high ecological significance. The County currently provides public access to the land and water resources at Mallow’s Bay Park and Maryland Department of Natural Resources manages the surrounding preserved land as Nanjemoy Wildlife Management Area.

State Parks, Open Spaces, and Public Recreation Assets



The Maryland Department of Natural Resources is a major provider of outdoor recreation opportunities in Charles County. The Department’s land holdings included multiple properties, including, forests, and open spaces preserved for their significant natural resource values. Most of the State

properties provide public access to various outdoor recreation opportunities, including hiking, camping, fishing, boating, hunting, nature appreciation, and basic amenities to support public participation (such as restrooms, boat ramps, and parking areas). Although not developed directly to provide public recreation opportunities, a relatively small portion of Department of Natural Resources lands, such as the Waldorf Natural Resources Police Barracks and fish hatchery properties, function to support direct resource protection, environmental enhancement work, and other large-scale efforts to preserve the larger natural resources on which the Department’s outdoor recreation offerings are based.

The majority of public park and open space land area in Charles County is managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources.

Since the last update of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan in 2017, the Department of Natural Resources expanded its total land holding in Charles County. Most parcels added to the State inventory since 2017 expanded the total acreage of existing parks, forests, and open space areas.

Table 3: Maryland Department of Natural Resources Properties in Charles County

Property	Acres
Cedar Point Wildlife Management Area	1,914
Cedarville State Forest	2,448
Chapel Point State Park	821
Chapman State Park	829
Chicamuxen Wildlife Management Area	382
Doncaster Demonstration Forest	2,132
Hughesville Pond Fisheries Management Area	3
Indian Creek Natural Resource Management Area	659
Manning Hatchery Fisheries Management Area	257
Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area	1,727
Maxwell Hall Natural Resource Management Area	670
Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area	5,018
Nanjemoy Creek Wildlife Management Area	230
Nanjemoy Wildlife Management Area	1,830
Popes Creek WMA	5,022
Riverside Wildlife Management Area	680
Smallwood State Park	984
Waldorf Natural Resources Police Barracks	3
Welcome Fire Tower	.75
Zekiah Swamp Natural Environmental Area	450

Source: FY2021 DNR Owned Lands Acreage Report – Maryland Department of Natural Resources

The Department also offered public programs and trainings that educated and engaged existing and new participants in outdoor recreation. Program offerings were diverse and ranged in focus from State-required hunter safety training to naturalist programs and ranger led nature hikes. Additionally, the Department and County maintain several partnerships at park sites, including Chapel Point State Park, Mallows Bay Park, and Maxwell Hall Park where public recreation amenities and service provision are enhanced through the collaborative efforts. The Department and the County school system are also currently working to develop programs for school children to be hosted at Mallows Bay Park.

In addition to these resources, the County and state also collaborate to provide and manage historic and cultural sites and attractions appreciated by locals and visitors, including the Civil War Trail. Charles County includes 14 points of interest pertaining to the Civil War conflict along this state designated driving trail. The Civil War Trail spans across the county and includes many sites along the escape route of John Wilkes Booth after his assassination of President Lincoln.

County and Municipal Parks, Recreation Amenities, and Open Spaces

As of January 2022, Charles County and Towns of Indian Head and La Plata own and manage various parks, open spaces, and recreation facilities disbursed throughout the County. The sites are highly valued by residents and visitors for their natural resources, the environmental and social functions they serve, as well as for the unique landscape character of Charles County that they preserve. Several parks, including Oak Ridge Park, provide a combination of developed facilities and natural resource-based recreation amenities, which provide for a diversity of recreation opportunities being offered at a single location. School sites throughout Charles County also served as key recreational resources for the public. Outside of regular school use, the athletic fields, sport courts, and associated recreation amenities at these sites were regularly used by youth and adult sport leagues for games and practices. A full inventory of existing public parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces is included in *Appendix D*.



Chapel Point State Park
Image Credit: Maryland Department of Natural Resources

The public parks and recreation areas managed by the County, County Board of Education, and Towns of La Plata and Indian Head have been classified into the following general categories:

1. Regional Parks
2. Community Parks
3. Neighborhood Parks and Community Centers (including mini-parks)
4. School Sites with shared use facilities
5. Sports Complexes
6. Special Use Areas
7. Natural Resource Areas

1. Regional Parks – are large park areas, typically over 100-acres in size, designed to provide a variety of recreational opportunities and meant to serve relatively large areas within the County. As of January 2017, there were eight regional parks within the County. Each provided amenities for organized sports and self-directed recreation opportunities. Facilities may differ at each park, but Charles County’s regional parks collectively offered opportunities for public participation in a wide variety of activities, which included, but were far from limited to, field sports, boating and other water-based activities, equestrian riding, golf, tennis, hiking, and biking. Regional Parks in Charles County include:



Laurel Springs Park Playground
Image Credit: Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

- Bensville Park
- Friendship Farm Park
- Gilbert Run Park
- Laurel Springs Park
- Maxwell Hall Park
- Oak Ridge Park
- Pisgah Park
- Waldorf Park
- White Plains Regional Park & Golf Course

2. Community Parks – typically range between 15 to 75 acres and designed to provide recreation opportunities and programs for the population residing within a three to five-mile radius of the park. The community parks in Charles County:

- Bryans Road Park
- Charlie Wright Park
- Indian Head Village Green and Senior Center
- La Plata Farm Park
- Mattingly Park
- Nanjemoy Community Center
- Nanjemoy Community Park
- Pinefield Park
- Pomfret Park
- Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park
- Southern Park
- Tilghman Lake Park
- Town Hall Park
- Turkey Hill Park

3. Neighborhood Parks and Community Centers

– tend to range between five and 25 acres and are developed in such a manner to attract users from within relatively short walking distances. Neighborhood parks generally provide recreation amenities such as walking paths, playgrounds, sports courts, and athletic fields. Neighborhood community center sites often provide indoor recreation opportunities as well for private or residential use. In Charles County, there are neighborhood parks and community centers available for use by members or associated Homeowner Association members or private providers. Also included as a subcategory of Neighborhood Parks were Mini-Parks. These small

recreation areas, typically less than one acre in size, provide recreation facilities such as playgrounds, grassed areas, and other amenities for public use and enjoyment. The mini-parks in Charles County are managed by different groups including private/quasi-public entities, municipalities, and the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. The parks and centers include:

- Agricopia Park
- Carroll La Plata Village
- Cobb Island Park
- Cobb Island Playground
- Hemlock Court
- Meekins Mini-Park
- Patuxent Court Mini-Park
- Phoenix Run Park I
- Phoenix Run Park II
- Redwood Lake
- Silver Linden Park
- St. Charles - Bannister Neighborhood Center
- St. Charles - Dorchester Community Center
- St. Charles - Fieldside Community Center
- St. Charles - Gleneagles Community Center
- St. Charles - Hampshire Community Center
- St. Charles - Huntington Community Ctr.
- St. Charles - Lambeth Hill Lake
- St. Charles - Lancaster Community Center
- St. Charles - Sheffield Community Center
- St. Charles - St. Paul's Lake
- St. Charles - Wakefield Community Ctr.
- St. Charles - Wakefield Lake
- Star Memorial Garden
- Train Station
- Woodland Village Neighborhood Park



*Community Center Program
Image Credit: Charles County Department of
Recreation, Parks, and Tourism*

4. School Sites with Shared Use Facilities – outside of school hours/use, 37 school sites provide the public with access to and use of athletic fields, sports courts, and other recreation facilities. The recreation areas at school sites are generally like neighborhood parks. They often serve many of the same general functions when not used for school programming. Most of these facilities are managed by the County Board of Education and include 78 acres of athletic fields. Maintenance of these school recreation athletic fields is provided by the County Parks and Grounds Division. School sites are used as School-Based Community Centers operated by the Recreation Division. Community centers are focal points within their geographic area that generate a sense of community through interaction and programs. Six school sites provide shared-use swimming pools, three indoor pools used year-round, and three outdoor pools used seasonally. School sites within the Charles County that allowed for public use outside of school use included:



*School Recreation Field
Image Credit: Charles County Department
of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism*

- Arthur Middleton ES
- Bel Alton High School
- Benjamin Stoddert MS and Stoddert Community Center
- Berry ES
- C. Paul Barnhart ES
- College of Southern Maryland
- Courthouse Soccer Field
- Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer ES
- Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School
- Dr. Samuel Mudd ES
- Dr. Thomas Higdon ES & Piccowaxen MS, and Piccowaxen Community Center
- Eva Turner ES
- F.B. Gwynn Center
- Gale Bailey ES
- General Smallwood MS and Smallwood Community Center
- Henry E. Lackey HS & Community Pool
- Indian Head ES
- J.C. Parks ES
- James Craik Elementary School
- John Hanson MS & Community Center & JP Ryon School
- La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School
- Malcolm ES
- Mary Burgess Neal ES
- Mattawoman Middle School and Mattawoman Community Center
- Matthew Henson Middle School and Henson Community Center
- Maurice McDonough HS and Pool
- Milton M. Somers Middle School and Somers Community Center
- Mt. Hope-Nanjemoy ES
- North Point High School & Community Pool
- Pinefield Future School Site
- Pomonkey Soccer Complex
- Robert D. Stethem Educational Center (old VoTech)
- St. Charles HS & Community Pool
- T.C. Martin ES
- Theodore G. Davis MS & Community Center
- Thomas Stone HS and Pool
- Billingsley ES
- Billingsley Community Center
- Walter J. Mitchell ES
- Westlake HS
- William A. Diggs ES
- William B. Wade ES & Wade Community Center

5. Sports Complexes – Of the three sports complexes available for public use in Charles County, two are operated by the County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. These facilities include multiple athletic fields and associated site features that support regular usage by organized sports teams and leagues. Sports Complexes are only open during scheduled athletic events and require a permit for use. Sports complexes in Charles County included:

- Bryantown Sports Complex
- Robert Stethem Park
- Southern Maryland Youth Organization Sports Complex (private management)

6. Special Use Areas – are generally sites or facilities operated for a narrow purpose. Roughly half of the special use areas in Charles County are marinas or boat launch sites. Public and private providers operate these sites. The Capital Clubhouse, a heavily used indoor recreation facility with multiple sports courts and an ice rink, is owned by the County but operated by a private vendor. Special use areas in Charles County:

- AMF Bowling Center
- Aqua Land Campgrounds and Marina
- Benedict Community Park
- Capital Clubhouse
- Captain John’s Marina
- Charles County Fairgrounds
- Clarks Senior Center
- Cobb Island Marina (Pirates Dens Marina)
- Desoto/Benedict Marina, Inc.
- Elite Gymnastics & Recreation Center
- Fun Haven Golf
- Goose Bay Marina and Campsites
- Hatton Creek Boat Ramp
- Hawthorne Country Club
- La Plata Park (Legion Fields)
- Marshall Hall Boat Launch Facility
- Mason Springs Soft Access Area
- Nanjemoy Creek Preserve
- Port Tobacco Marina and Campground
- Port Tobacco Recreation Center
- Regency Stadium
- Rosewick Rd./St Charles Parkway
- Saunders Marina
- Shymansky’s
- Sky Zone Trampoline Park
- Wicomico Motor Sports Park
- Spring Dell Center
- Swann Point Golf Course
- Unique Sports Academy Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center



Image Credit: Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism



7. Natural Resource Areas – Most of these sites, preserved primarily for their natural resource values, range from hundreds to thousands of acres in size and consist mainly of forests, wetlands, and areas critical to watershed protection. These areas also provide significant opportunities for public participation in natural resource based, outdoor recreation activities including camping, hunting, fishing, and hiking, that help connect people with the natural environment. Natural resource area lands are preserved by the County and State. Most natural resource areas are state-designated Natural Resource Management Areas, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, and Natural Environmental Areas managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources. Natural resource areas include:

- Ben Doane Area - Nanjemoy WMA
- Clark Run Natural Area
- Douglas Point State NRMA
- Douglass Point Special Recreation Area- BLM
- Indian Creek NRMA
- Mallows Bay Park
- Nanjemoy Wildlife Mgmt. Area (Wilson Landing Road)
- Popes Creek Highland Park Property
- Port Tobacco River Park
- Cedarville State Forest
- Doncaster State Forest
- Governor Glendening Natural Environmental Area (Chapmans Residual)
- Grove Natural Environmental Area
- Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area
- Zekiah Swamp Natural Environmental Area



C. The Significance of Program Open Space

Charles County depends on Program Open Space funds to assist in implementing the goals of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan. Established in 1969, and administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Program Open Space receives funding through a small statewide real estate transfer tax and spreads that funding into multiple subprograms for open space preservation and the enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities for the public benefit.

Each year Charles County Government develops/updates a five-year open space/park acquisition and development plan. This plan is designed to address solutions to citizen demands for outdoor recreational facilities. This five-year plan is basically a park priority list formulated as a result of direct citizen input, public hearings, and meetings with organized recreation associations.

Charles County's open space priorities include providing active and passive outdoor recreation opportunities for our residents; preserving natural heritage areas; and protecting sensitive and unique environmental features of the County.

The projects selected in this annual report are consistent with the County's current Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). The LPPRP clearly states that the demand for active recreation facilities continues to grow and that there is an immediate need to plan and develop such facilities. Athletic playing fields and hiking/biking trails have not kept pace with the County's rapid population growth. Additionally, the LPPRP calls for more open space acquisition and recreational facilities throughout the County. Recreational demands continue to grow in our area, specifically in the greater Waldorf and La Plata communities. Water access amenities continue to be a priority as well.

Charles County's priority open space plan is compiled by the Department of Recreation, Parks & Tourism, Parks and Grounds Division. Charles County's Annual Program Report for FY22: Acquisitions are listed below:

- Gilligan's Pier Property Acquisition (Acquired in March 2022)
- Godwin/Hungerford Property Acquisition Development

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Program Open Space is good for business and the overall quality of life in Maryland. As of 2015 Program Open Space:

- Protected 380,000 acres of land statewide.
- Awarded more than 5,800 grants to local governments through Program Open Space Local.
- Enhanced quality of communities.
- Established Greenways and Green Infrastructure networks.
- Provided state and local park or public open space areas within 15 minutes of most residents.



Facility Development/Rehabilitation:

- Waldorf Park
- La Plata Farm Park
- Synthetic Turf Fields for various parks

The strategic enhancements of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces that utilized Program Open Space funds are planned to help the County work toward achieving the goals of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, as well as those of the County Comprehensive Plan, and State of Maryland.

\$1,478,975

Program Open Space Local side funding has been leveraged to acquire land for parks and to enhance recreation opportunities in Charles County since 2012.

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the overall economic benefits derived from investing in public open spaces and outdoor recreation opportunities in Maryland include:

- Home values tend to increase faster around parks and protected open space than comparable homes in other settings.
- New businesses prefer to locate in communities with parks and quality environments.
- Tourism is one of Maryland’s top industries. Historical structures, landscapes, parks, and forests supported by Program Open Space are essential to the continued growth of this sector of Maryland’s economy.
- The Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress reported that a city’s quality of life is “more important than purely business-related factors” when it comes to attracting new businesses.
- Businesses which move to an area because of tax incentives tend to leave as soon as the incentives expire. Businesses drawn to an area because of its quality of life remain long-term residents and taxpayers.

D. Role and Resources of the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism Organization

The operations, maintenance, programming, and year-round services provided by the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism are major contributors to local quality of life, and visitors' impressions of the County. As one of the major providers of local recreation programs, facilities, and activities, the Department's operations have a positive impact on public health, the environment, economy, and general well-being of the local population.

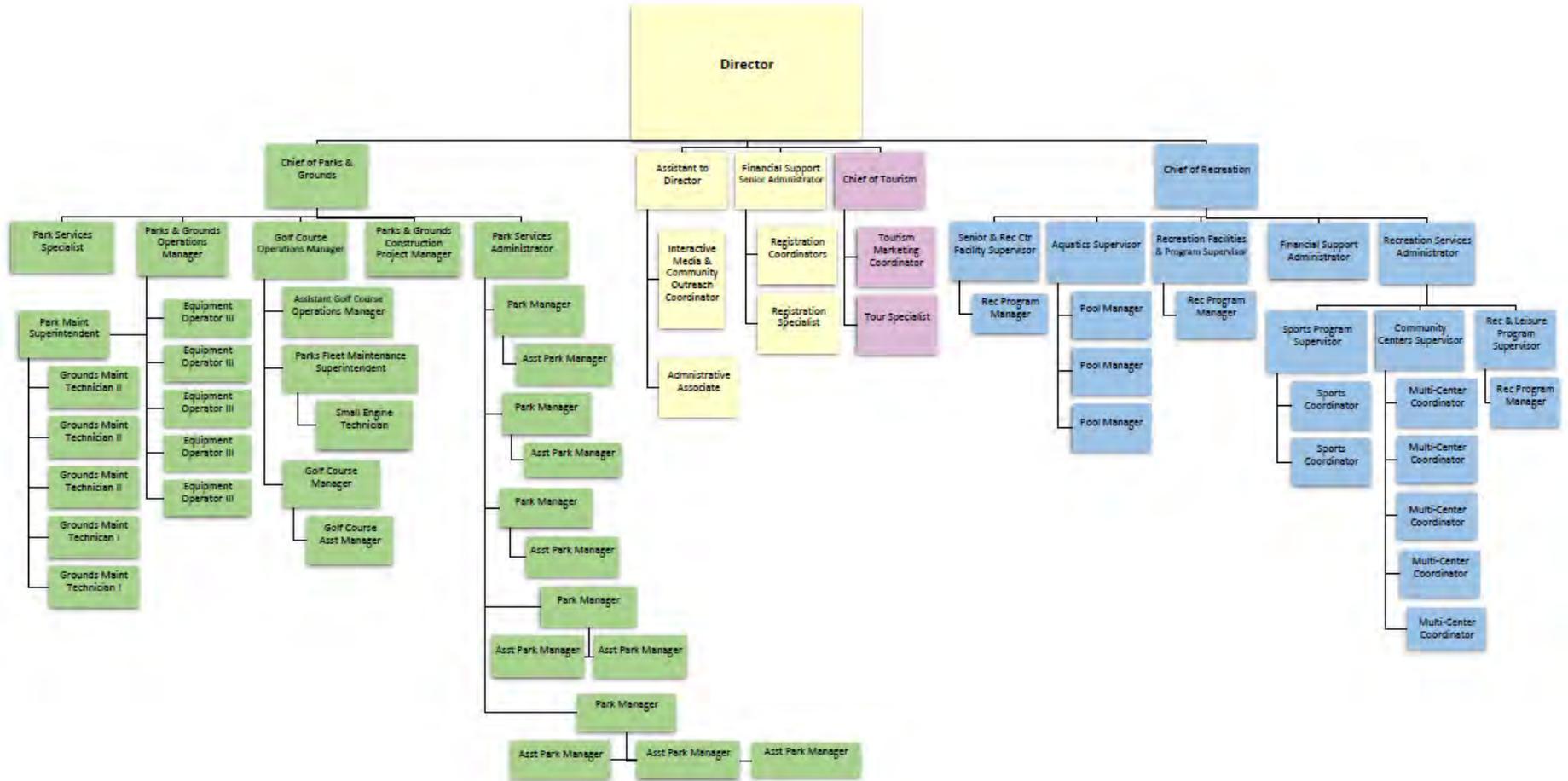
The Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism's mission is simply to enhance the quality of life of Charles County residents and visitors through providing enjoyable recreation and tourism opportunities. The department strives to deliver interesting, diverse, and high quality programs and facilities that are available to all persons in the community and works to preserve, enhance, and protect open spaces to enrich the quality of life for present and future generations in a safe and secure environment.

Mission Statement

As illustrated in *Figure 5*, within the local government structure, the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism falls under the direction of the Board of County Commissioners and the Office of the County Administrator. The organizational composition of the department can be found in the chart below.



Figure 5: Charles County Government Organization Chart FY 2022



Source: FY2022 Budget Book

The Recreation Division offers a variety of structured and non-structured sports leagues and activities for persons of all ages. All programs are self-supporting, with youth leagues supplemented by the County for officials and part-time facility supervision. Sports programs and leagues include Youth and Adult Basketball, Youth and Adult Soccer, Youth and Adult Volleyball, Youth and Adult Kickball and Adult Softball.

The County has three Indoor Pools are operated year-round at Lackey High School, North Point High School, and the Donald M. Wade Aquatic Center. Three Outdoor Pools are operated seasonally at La Plata, McDonough, and Thomas Stone High Schools. In addition to daily admission, the pools offer swim lessons, water aerobics, water safety, birthday parties, private rentals, and a variety of other programs and special events.

Camp CO-OP is an exciting day camp for special education students between the ages of 5 & 21 with moderate to severe disabilities. The Department also offers limited therapeutic programs that are operated under the auspices of the county Special Olympics Program.

The Elite Gymnastics & Recreation Center provides traditional gymnastics and dance classes for beginner to advanced levels for all ages. Pre-competitive and competitive teams are offered under the guidance of the USA Gymnastics Jr. Olympic Program.

Operation of ten school-based Community Centers and Port Tobacco Recreation Center to host a variety of programs, services, activities, sports leagues, and recreational opportunities to persons of all ages. They are focal points in each geographic area of Charles County and generate a sense of community through interaction and programs Community Centers offer drop-in programs, summer camps, middle school afterschool programs and host indoor sports, fitness classes, recreational and leisure programs, and special events. Community Centers programs include Class programs, Middle School After School program, Drop-In programs, Summer Camps, Fitness classes and Special Events.

The Waldorf Senior & Recreational Center is a multi-Generational facility hosting a variety of recreational and leisure programs, as well as the home to the Waldorf Senior Center. The facility has a basketball court, racquetball courts, fitness room, group exercise room, youth room, large multi-purpose room, and several classrooms.

The Department consists of four overall divisions as noted below with *Figure 6* representing the staffing history from FY2018-FY2022.





Parks and Recreation Successes since 2017

- Renovation and opening of Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center– In 2017, Charles County Commissioners purchased a vacant property formerly a Sport and Health Club at 90 Post Office Road, Waldorf MD, for the renovation and development of a Multi-Generational Facility. After an extensive renovation period this 2-story, 30,000 sq. ft facility opened in September 2019. The space includes a gymnasium, large multi-purpose room, classrooms, art room, workout equipment room, group fitness room, and a youth room.
- Opened an additional school-based community center – Billingsley (Elem) Community Center – Sept. 2019. – Billingsley Community Center is located at Billingsley Elementary School in White Plains, MD. The Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism has a dedicated office and storage space and utilization of full-size gymnasium, cafeteria, and classroom. The facility operates daily from 4-9pm and Saturdays from 10-2 during the school year and open in the summer for various summer camp programs.
- Creation of RecAssist financial assistance program - RecAssist is an annual (July 1 - June 30) scholarship fund program offered by Charles County Recreation, Parks & Tourism to individuals who provide proof they are current recipients of assistance from eligible programs listed below. Eligible recipients will receive an annual RecPASS which can be used for drop-in activities or daily admissions at Community Centers, Waldorf Senior and Recreation Center and swimming pool.
- Website Redevelopment
www.charlescountyparks.com – redeveloped and live December 2019
www.explorecharlescounty.com – redeveloped and live in June 2020
- Bald Eagle Camera - The Port Tobacco Bald Eagle Cam was launched in fall of 2018 in partnership with Terrain360, the Southern Maryland Audubon Society and the Port Tobacco River Conservancy. The cam, located in the Port Tobacco River Park, live streams 2 eagles and their nesting process throughout the year. A naming contest was held in early 2019 with the winning names, Chandler and Hope, being selected by public vote. Chandler and Hope have produced multiple eggs every year on the cam and have successfully fledged eaglets in 2019 and 2020.
- Capital Clubhouse signed a long-Term Operational Lease with Black Bear Sports in July 2021- The Capital Clubhouse is a county owned facility and signed a long term 25 year operational and management lease with Black Bear Sports Group. Black Bear Sports Group is the largest rink operator in the US and brings additional resources and amenities to Charles County specifically in the ice arena industry including hockey, figure skating, and learn to skate programs.
- Striping of Pickleball Courts outdoors and indoors – Indoors at Port Tobacco Gymnasium, Waldorf Senior, and Recreational Center; Outdoors at White Plains Park, and Southern Park.
- Mallow Bay NOAA National Marine Sanctuary Designation - National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the State of Maryland and Charles County Government have announced the designation of a new national marine sanctuary to protect the remains of more than 100 abandoned steamships and vessels built as part of America’s engagement in World War I. Mallow Bay is most renowned for its “Ghost Fleet,” the partially submerged remains of more than 100 wooden steamships that were built in response to threats from World War I-era German U-boats that were sinking ships in the Atlantic. Although the ships never saw action during the war, their construction at more than 40 shipyards in 17 states reflected the massive national wartime effort that drove the expansion and economic development of communities and related maritime service industries. The fleet was brought to the Potomac River to be salvaged for scrap metal by a company in Alexandria, Virginia, not far from the sanctuary site.



The sanctuary was formally designated on September 3, 2019, following 45 days of continuous congressional session after publication in the Federal Register on July 8. NOAA, the State of Maryland, and Charles County Government will manage the national marine sanctuary jointly.

- Chapel Point Park – Lease agreement signed in 2018 <https://news.maryland.gov/dnr/2018/07/19/charles-county-to-manage-section-of-chapel-point-state-park/>
- Port Tobacco River Park – Ribbon Cutting Sept. 2017 <https://smnewsnet.com/archives/424659/charles-county-celebrates-port-tobacco-river-park-ribbon-cutting/>

Department Structure

The Parks and Recreation Department in Charles County consists of four divisions that maintain complete operations and programs for residents of the county. The divisions are Administration Division, Parks and Grounds Division, Recreation Division, and the Tourism Division. Working together through strong leadership and communication efforts. Each division is listed below with a complete description of responsibilities.

Administration – manages and provides leadership functions of the Department, including developing budgets, strategic planning, human resources, and special projects. A combination of full and part time staff, inclusive of the Department’s Director and Assistant Director, are dedicated to completing core support services, and honing the overall vision and mission of the new Department.

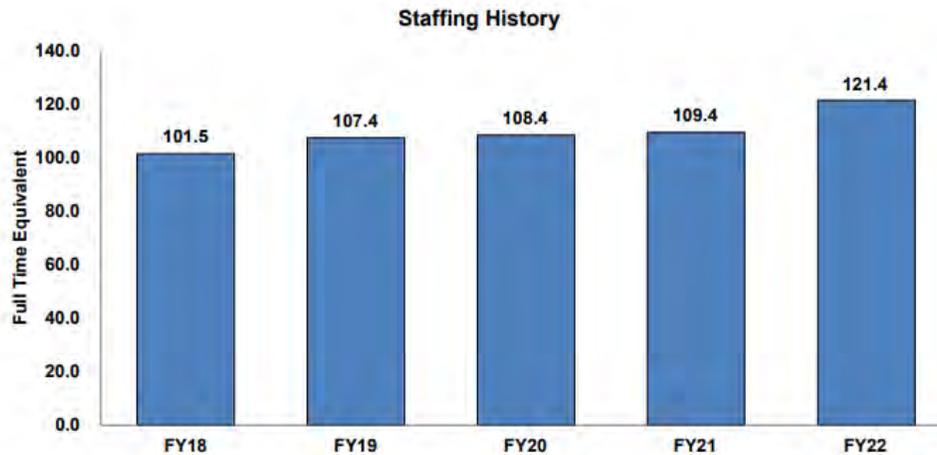
Parks and Grounds Division – is responsible for regular grounds operation and landscape maintenance of 31 County parks and recreation properties, as well as 39 school recreation sites and other county-owned open spaces. The Parks and Grounds Division maintains the parks and additional County lands on an annual basis. Assets maintained included diverse recreation and support facilities such as sports fields, landscaped areas, a golf course, boat ramps, hiking trails, parking lots, picnic pavilions, and piers. In addition to the management of these facilities, the Parks and Grounds Division manages the Department’s provision of outdoor sports programs.

Recreation Division – the Recreation Division plans, and provides year-round sports, recreation, aquatics, arts, therapeutic, and educational programs for all ages. Dozens of programs are provided annually, as detailed in the Department’s quarterly/seasonal catalog “the GUIDE.” Department programs play a significant role in the lives of many households in Charles County. As is a normal practice nationally, fees are charged for participation and admission to most Division programs and events that defer the overall cost to taxpayers in the provision of these public services.

The Recreation Division also operates ten multiple use school-based community centers, Elite Gymnastics and Recreation Center, Port Tobacco Gymnasium, and three indoor and three outdoor pools. These facilities host the many of the activities, workshops, programs, camps, and special events offered by the Division.

Tourism Division – the development of visitation, diverse, and high-quality visitor experiences in Charles County were identified by the 2016 Comprehensive Plan as an important component of local economic development. The Department’s Tourism team developed and managed programs and special events, and worked to promote the County’s cultural, historic, and recreational amenities as attractive experiences to potential visitors. The programs and events hosted by Tourism target leisure, business, and heritage visitation.

Figure 6: Staffing History of Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.



<u>Positions by Program:</u>	<u>FY18</u>	<u>FY19</u>	<u>FY20</u>	<u>FY21</u>	<u>FY22</u>
Administration	7.5	7.5	6.5	6.5	8.5
Recreation	29.1	34.0	36.0	37.0	46.0
Parks & Grounds	57.4	58.4	58.4	58.4	59.4
Tourism	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5	7.5
Total Full Time Equivalent	101.5	107.4	108.4	109.4	121.4

Source: Charles County FY2022 Budget Book

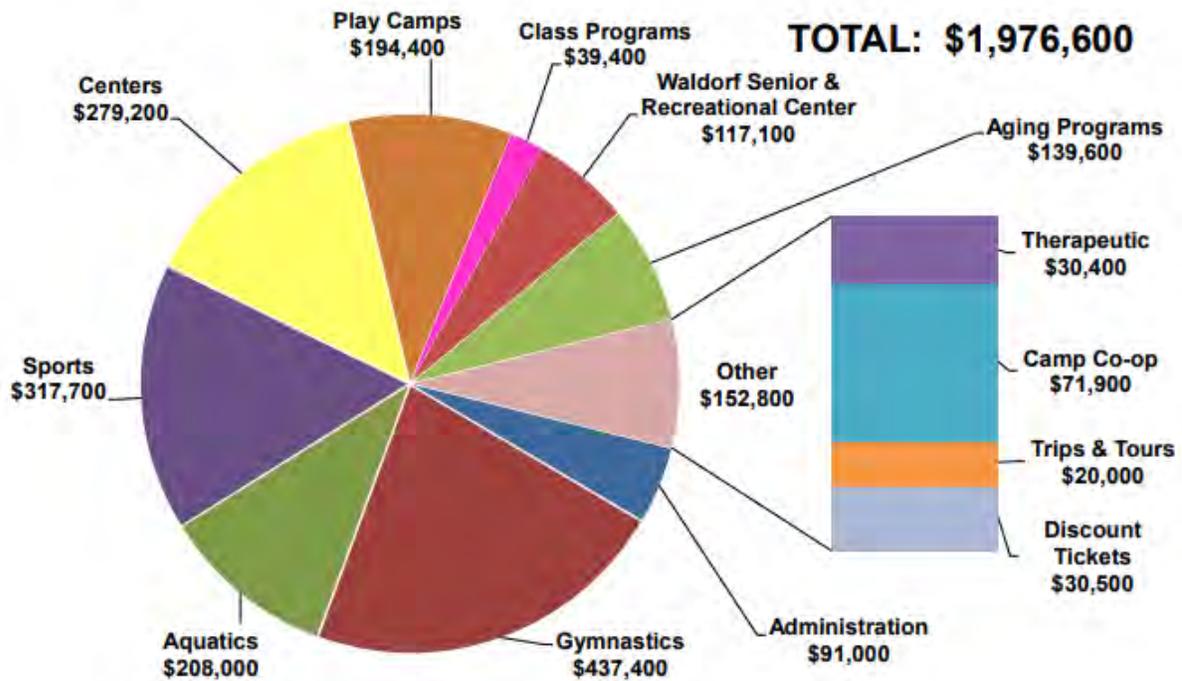
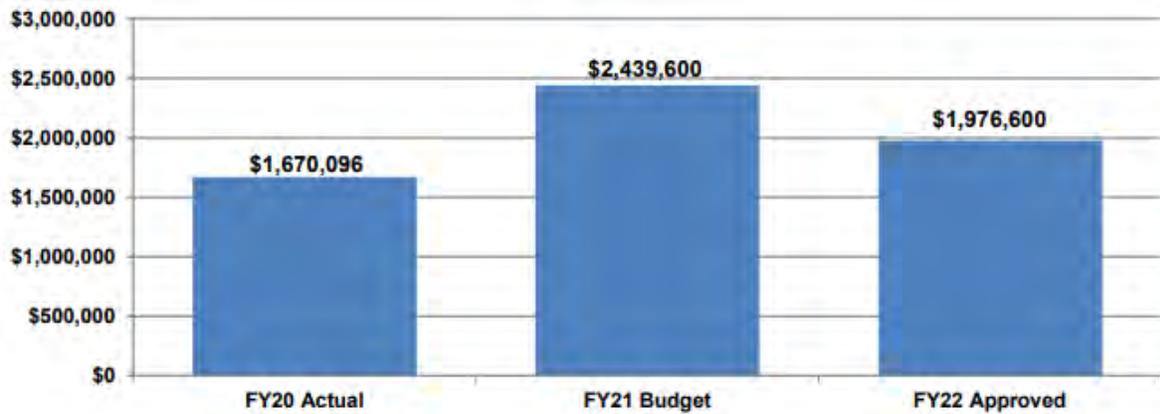
Charles County’s current Budget Book details the FY2022 budget adopted by the Board of County Commissioners and provides key information regarding the overall operations of the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism. Information presented below regarding the Department’s budget and overall operations are further detailed in the - FY2022 [Budget Book](#).

Budgets and Funding - Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism

Table 4: Recreation Fund

Expenditure Category	FY2020 Actual	FY2021 Adopted	FY2022 Request	FY2022 Adopted	\$ Change from FY2021	% Chg.
Personal Services	\$896,400	\$1,382,100	\$1,060,100	\$1,087,200	(\$294,900)	-21.3%
Fringe Benefits	122,467	153,400	108,900	111,300	(42,100)	-27.4%
Operating Costs	575,323	726,400	637,600	637,600	(88,800)	-12.2%
Operating Contingency	0	28,500	30,400	900	(27,600)	-96.8%
Total Expenditures	\$1,594,190	\$2,290,400	\$1,837,000	\$1,837,000	(\$453,400)	-19.8%
Revenues	\$1,303,208	\$2,290,400	\$2,051,800	\$1,836,800	(\$453,600)	-19.8%

Table 5: Recreation Fund Revenues



Enterprise Funds

The Recreation Division charged modest fees for participation in program offerings and attendance at events. As reported by the Budget Book, the Division processed over 9,000 program registrations, and is expected to collect close to \$2 million in associated user fees for FY2022. These fees for services were accounted for in the County’s “Recreation Fund.” As illustrated in *Table 5*, most fees were collected for participation in gymnastics, aquatics, sports, and center programs. Fees collected in the Recreation Fund are used by the Department to help cover staffing and operational costs for programs and recreation facilities. Aging Programs are part of the enterprise fund but managed through the Aging and Senior Programs Division with the Department of Community Services.

Capital Improvement Projects

As detailed in the FY2022 Budget Book, the capital improvement budget for planned enhancement of the County’s system of parks, recreation amenities, and open spaces included projects proposed to enhance existing facilities, develop new amenities, and acquire land for new public parks and open spaces. The current capital improvement funding approved by the Board of County Commissions for FY2021 through FY2025 is illustrated in **Table 6**.

Projects with Future Operating Impacts:

PROJECT	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026
Waldorf Park Development, Phase I	\$0.0	\$272.9	\$282.7	\$292.9	\$303.5
Synthetic Turf Fields	0.0	0.0	(10.2)	(21.0)	(21.5)
Vehicle & Equipment Lease	0.0	25.0	50.1	50.1	50.1
Total	\$0.0	\$297.9	\$322.6	\$322.0	\$332.1

Beyond FY 2026	FTE
\$314.9	3.96
(\$22.2)	0.00
50.1	
\$342.8	3.96

STATE-PROGRAM OPEN SPACE: (\$ in '000's)

PROJECT	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	'22-'26
Popes Creek Waterfront Ph II	\$63	\$459	\$450	\$351	\$0	\$1,323
Waldorf Park Development, Phase I	1,500	0	0	0	0	1,500
Waldorf Park Development, Phase II	0	1,498	0	0	0	1,498
La Plata Farm Park Development, Phase I	86	0	0	0	0	86
Total	\$1,649	\$1,957	\$450	\$351	\$0	\$4,407

Key Projects

FY2022 parks and recreation improvement projects, detailed below, are supportive of the County’s 2022 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation plan goals for parks and recreation.

Various Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities

Continue to provide a network of pedestrian & bicycle facilities within the Development District and to provide amenities such as park & walk/bike lots and rest stops as part of the linear trails being constructed with the Enhanced Transportation program.

Popes Creek Waterfront Phase II

DRPT anticipates the feasibility study of recently acquired parcel of waterfront property including a restaurant building and parking area w/easement to adjacent county park property. This property will provide a critical parking area for the Popes Creek Rail Trail and the Popes Creek Waterfront Park. Plans for the building include a waterman’s heritage museum, crabbing/fishing pier, kayak rentals, concession stand, conference center, retail stalls, and a summer camp venue.

Waldorf Park Development Phase I

Development of this park is a priority to meet the active and passive outdoor recreational needs of one of the fastest growing areas in the county. Planned amenities include lighted football and soccer fields for games and practice, basketball and tennis courts, a large playground with adaptive (special needs) features, group picnic pavilions, nature, and fitness trails and more. Phase I will include all excavation, grading, and site work, including storm water management; construction and improvements to two entrance/exit points, ballfield construction to include lighting, fencing, bleachers, and installation of Bermuda turf; parking lot construction; utilities (electric and water); and basic site prep for all other park amenities.



Waldorf Park Development Phase II

Development of this park is a priority to meet the active and passive outdoor recreational needs of one of the fastest growing areas in the county. Planned amenities include lighted football and soccer fields for games and practice, basketball and tennis courts, a large playground with adaptive (special needs) features, group picnic pavilions, nature, and fitness trails and more.

Smallwood Drive Shared Use Paths Phase I & II

Drawing on recommendations from a consultant report on bicycle and pedestrian connectivity in Waldorf, this project (which will proceed in two phases) will extend the current 4- to 6-foot-wide sidewalks on Smallwood Drive West and create 10-foot-wide shared use paths for the entire length (2.7 miles) of Smallwood Drive West between Crain Highway/US 301 and Middletown Road. This project would expand the bicycle and pedestrian network west of US 301 and connect to the existing shared use paths on McDaniel Road and Middletown Road, increasing the connectivity of Waldorf's bicycle and pedestrian network and improving bicycle and pedestrian accessibility for residents. Staff plan to submit a grant application to either the Maryland Bikeways program, administered by MDOT, or the Transportation Alternatives Set-Aside Program to reduce the cost of the project to the County.

La Plata Farm Park Master Plan

To develop a Master Plan for the design, engineering and planning of a 54-acre tract of currently owned land in La Plata, to be noted as "La Plata Farm Park". Development of this site will be a key factor in meeting some now non-available outdoor recreational needs of county residents. La Plata Farm Park's theme will incorporate the county's agricultural history along with mixed use recreational activities not currently available in our other parks. Charles County Parks feels the diversity and complexity involved in the development of this park justifies the need for a designed master plan to develop such a complex professionally and properly. This will also allow for phase work if need for budget concerns and avoiding the costly mistakes that may occur by trying to piecemeal such a project together. Based on past and present design planning and engineering work having and currently being performed in the park system the recommendations for the need master plan for La Plata Farm Park will be \$200,000.00

La Plata Farm Park Development Phase I

Dog Park: Due to the increase demand for a La Plata based dog park the Charles County Parks Division have decided it to meet the publics' request. Charles County Parks will construct a dog park as Phase 1 of the soon to be developed mixed use "La Plata Farm Park". This amenity will include a 2.5-acre parcel, encompassed with chain link fencing. It will incorporate a mix of shaded and open areas with seating and tables for Park patrons and play equipment for animals. This will include the construction of widening an existing roadway and incorporating a 20-car parking area. **Hiking Trail:** As an added feature Charles County Parks will also construct a hiking trail through a variety of natural and user-friendly areas that will follow the basic boundaries of the property.

Mallows Bay Restrooms

To install restrooms at the Mallow's Bay Park.

Synthetic Turf Fields

Installation of Synthetic Turf at White Plains Park and Laurel Springs Park. This will include all labor, materials, tools, and equipment needed to put in the drainage base and installation of turf with inlaid markings for 5/6 sports (regulation soccer, intermediate soccer, football, boys' lacrosse, girls lacrosse, and field hockey). This request is needed to keep up with the high demand of sports leagues game requests. The synthetic turf will allow us to play games year-round. The turf field will eliminate weekly

mowing, spring and fall fertilizing, weekly painting of lines, and most of all eliminate cancelled games due to inclement weather.

Table 6: Approved Capital Improvement Program

CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM				
FY2022-FY2026 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM				
TOTAL GOVERNMENTAL PROJECTS = \$333,789,000				
	FY22-FY26 Total	Project* Total	FY22-FY26 Total	Project* Total
BOARD OF EDUCATION				
Benjamin Slodgett Middle School - Modernization/Addition	\$9,030,000	\$56,116,000		
Middle School #9	28,826,000	52,601,000		
Elementary School #23	42,791,000	45,191,000		
T.C. Martin Elementary School Study/Renovation/Addition	29,558,000	31,884,000		
McDonough High School Renovation Study/Security Enhancements & Performing Arts	15,891,000	19,945,000		
La Plata High School Renovation/ Security Enhancements and Circulation Upgrades	17,110,000	17,110,000		
Limited Renovation: Dr. Gustavus Brown E.S.	6,766,000	6,766,000		
Full Day Kindergarten Addition: Walter J. Mitchell E.S.	6,060,000	6,510,000		
Full Day Kindergarten Addition: Wade E.S.	4,700,000	4,700,000		
Smallwood M.S. Roof/Chiller/H&V/UV Replacement	3,950,000	4,428,000		
Mattawoman MS - Roof Replacement	4,330,000	4,330,000		
Full Day Kindergarten Addition: J.C. Parks E.S.	3,918,000	4,318,000		
Full Day Kindergarten Addition: Dr. Higdon E.S.	4,175,000	4,175,000		
BOE Various Maintenance Projects	3,055,000	3,666,000		
Westlake H.S. Roof Replacement	2,579,000	3,642,000		
Mary H. Malaja Elementary - Roof Replacement	1,821,000	1,821,000		
Indian Head E.S. Boiler Replacement	1,197,000	1,326,000		
Local Portable Classrooms - Various Schools	1,000,000	1,200,000		
Pocomoxen M.S. Boiler Replacement	795,000	795,000		
Contingency- Inflation	17,169,000	22,725,000		
Total	\$204,712,000	\$293,249,000		
% County Funded	51%	53%		
TRANSPORTATION				
Road Overlay Program	\$20,802,000	\$24,963,000		
County Drainage Systems Improvement Program	3,705,000	6,736,000		
Safety Improvement Program- Existing Roadways	1,447,000	2,506,600		
Traffic Signal Program	1,437,000	2,718,400		
Sidewalk Improvement Program	777,000	933,000		
Billingsley Road Safety Improvements	3,215,000	10,590,000		
Western Parkway Road Improvements Phase 3	1,851,000	16,633,900		
Turkey Hill Road Reconstruction	1,179,000	6,042,000		
Route 301 South Bound Lane and Traffic Signal Improvements	2,838,000	2,838,000		
Pinefield Road/Md. Route 5 Business Intersection Improvements	1,532,000	1,532,400		
Substation Road Improvements	1,986,000	1,986,000		
Bridge Replacement Program	809,000	809,000		
Old Washington Road Reconstruction	0	16,055,000		
Billingsley Rd at Bensville Rd Intersection Improvements	1,050,000	1,050,000		
WURC Stormwater Outfall	406,000	545,000		
Contingency- Inflation	751,000	3,686,600		
Total	\$43,786,000	\$99,624,900		
% County Funded	96%	98%		
GENERAL GOVERNMENT				
Radio Communications System Upgrade	\$15,132,000	\$34,679,000		
Charles County Animal Shelter	4,249,000	13,859,500		
Charles County VanGO Maintenance Facility	11,657,000	12,797,000		
La Plata Library Relocation	5,656,000	10,974,000		
Rural Legacy Program	7,072,000	8,484,000		
Purchase of Developments Rights (PDR) Program	3,292,000	3,948,000		
Agricultural Preservation	2,542,000	3,048,000		
Various Maintenance Projects	2,197,000	2,637,000		
Pinefield EMS Station	1,967,000	2,607,000		
La Plata Library Renovation	2,111,000	2,111,000		
Office Space Renovations	890,000	1,842,000		
Capital Clubhouse HVAC Replacement	904,000	1,549,500		
Detention Center Pump Station Rehabilitations	619,000	1,486,000		
Fueling Site Improvements	1,437,000	1,437,000		
Blue Crabs Stadium Maintenance	1,012,000	1,215,000		
Elite Gymnastic Center Water Infiltration Remediation	555,000	997,000		
Generator Replacement Program	115,000	588,000		
Contingency- Inflation	2,225,000	2,957,000		
Total	\$63,632,000	\$106,726,000		
% County Funded	78%	84%		
PARKS				
Waldorf Park Development Ph I	\$2,032,000	\$2,174,000		
Synthetic Turf Fields	2,010,000	2,010,000		
Waldorf Park Development Ph II	2,032,000	2,032,000		
Popes Creek Watershed Phase II	1,937,000	1,962,000		
Park Repair & Maintenance Projects	1,398,000	1,662,000		
Various Parkamen & Bicycle Facilities	499,000	620,000		
Hallows Bay Restrooms	500,000	500,000		
Smallwood Drive Shared Use Paths Ph II	454,000	454,000		
Smallwood Drive Shared Use Paths Ph I	425,000	492,000		
La Plata Farm Park Master Plan	200,000	200,000		
La Plata Farm Park Development, Phase I	120,000	130,000		
Contingency- Inflation	432,000	526,000		
Total	\$11,843,000	\$12,882,000		
% County Funded	83%	84%		
COLLEGE OF SOUTHERN MARYLAND				
Health Technology Renovation	\$5,406,500	\$5,406,500		
Waste Water Treatment Plant Replacement	3,903,000	3,903,000		
Contingency- Inflation	406,500	406,500		
Total	\$9,716,000	\$9,716,000		
% County Funded	28%	28%		

*Project funding could include appropriations funded prior to FY2022 and/or additional funding beyond FY2026 to complete the project.



Open Space and Parks and Recreational Land Goals Established in 2017	Type and Specific Location	Acreage Needed	Acreage Required
Proven need for additional recreation facilities	Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center – Additional parking for new facility		1.5 acres
Preserve lands of Natural Resource Value	Port Tobacco River Park – Jamieson Property acquired to expand public access to Port Tobacco Historic Village		3 acres
Waterfront property suitable for public water access development	Popes Creek Gilligan’s Pier property acquired to expand public access to waterfront		18 acres
Protect 50% of County Land	Expansion to the Zekiah Rural Legacy Area and Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Forest Rural Legacy Area		Added additional 30,591 to Zekaih Rural Legacy Area. Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Forest Rural Legacy Area designation was approved by the County and State. This new Rural Legacy Area contains 65,059 acres on the western side of the County.

Mid-Term and Long-Term Capital Planning

During the upcoming LPPRP cycle, the department has a goal to develop and establish a long-term Master Plan. This plan will build on existing goals to further develop existing properties and identify priority acquisition property areas. The county continues to seek property to provide walkable parks and amenities in the Waldorf area which continues to be the most densely populated areas. Additionally, the county seeks waterfront property capable to be developed for recreation use. Long Term facility goals are to develop large indoor recreation complex which will include swimming pool, sports courts, and community program space. Lastly the department will continue to work with the National Oceanic Atmospheric Administration and the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to develop the amenities of the Mallows Bay National Marine Sanctuary.

Open Space and Parks and Recreational Land Goals 2022	Type and Specific Location	Acreage Needed	Plan for Meeting Need
Additional parks and recreation facilities in key areas identified in Park Equity Mapping and Service Analysis	Open space for regional complex for outdoor and indoor recreation. Specific locations include urban areas of Waldorf, and rural areas of Bryans Road/ Indian Head, Nanjemoy, Cobb Island.		Identify parcels as they become available. Acquisition through Program Open space
Waterfront access and development along the Potomac, Patuxent, and Wicomico Rivers	Property should support amenities such as beach access, kayak launch, boat ramps, fishing, swimming.		Identify parcels as they become available. Acquisition through Program Open space
Indian Head Trail Extension connecting to Three Notch Trail in St. Mary's county			Feasibility study is ongoing and will be completed in 2022
Protect 50% of County Land	Target undeveloped land for preservation	46,109 acres	

The Significance of Program Open Space

Charles County depends on Program Open Space funds to assist in implementing the goals of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan. Established in 1969, and administered by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Program Open Space receives funding through a small statewide real estate transfer tax and spreads that funding into multiple subprograms for open space preservation and the enhancement of outdoor recreation opportunities for the public benefit.

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, Program Open Space is good for business and the overall quality of life in Maryland. As of 2015 Program Open Space:

- Protected 380,000 acres of land statewide.
- Awarded more than 5,800 grants to local governments through Program Open Space Local.
- Enhanced quality of communities.
- Established Greenways and Green Infrastructure networks.
- Provided state and local park or public open space areas within 15 minutes of most residents.

Program Open Space –

Local program used by Charles County since the Program's inception to match County funds to improve the local parks and recreation system through the acquisition of land for parks and open spaces, and enhancement of public recreation opportunities within the County. Charles County's use of the funds as guided by the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan through the submission of an annual program filed Maryland Department of Natural Resources each July. The existing approved annual program for FY2022 included:

- **Land Acquisition:**
 - Popes Creek Acquisition Phase II – two parcels totaling 668 acres, including over 100 acres of coastal areas and wetlands proposed for acquisition. The parcels are adjacent to existing parkland and Popes Creek Rail Trail.
- **Facility Development/Rehabilitation:**
 - Popes Creek Rail Trail Phase II – continued development of the 2.7-mile Popes Creek Rail Trail.
 - Pinefield Community Park Improvements – proposed enhancements to this existing 20-acre park site in Waldorf included:
 - Rehabilitation of basketball courts, baseball fields, and soccer fields, turf renovation throughout the park, and construction of a new group picnic pavilion.

The strategic enhancements of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces that utilized Program Open Space funds were planned to help the County work toward achieving the goals of the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, as well as those of the County Comprehensive Plan, and State of Maryland.

\$7,219,450

Program Open Space Local side funding is leveraged to acquire land for parks and to enhance recreation opportunities in Charles County since 2017.

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the overall economic benefits derived from investing in public open spaces and outdoor recreation opportunities in Maryland include:

- Home values tend to increase faster around parks and protected open space than comparable homes in other settings.
- New businesses prefer to locate in communities with parks and quality environments.
- Tourism is one of Maryland's top industries. Historical structures, landscapes, parks, and forests supported by Program Open Space are essential to the continued growth of this sector of Maryland's economy.
- The Joint Economic Committee of the U.S. Congress reported that a city's quality of life is "more important than purely business-related factors" when it comes to attracting new businesses.
- Businesses which move to an area because of tax incentives tend to leave as soon as the incentives expire. Businesses drawn to an area because of its quality of life remain long-term residents and taxpayers.

E. Park Equity Mapper

The Maryland Park Equity Map Tool was developed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in partnership with the University of Maryland School of Public Health. This application combines demographic and environmental health data from a variety of sources and maps that data onto Maryland census block groups to identify disparities in park access and quality. The data in the mapper is pulled from 2017 GIS submittals. This application allows users to evaluate the green space available in their community and see how it compares to the rest of Maryland.

Specific analysis of Park Equity Mapper showed some deficiencies for Charles County. The mapping tool shows a need for updating to include several parks and recreation amenities that are not currently included in the current data analysis. As a county, Charles County was one of the lower ranked counties in Maryland in terms of Park Equity. Some of this can be attributed to the missing parks from the tools, however this map also shows the need for additional amenities specific areas of the county including Waldorf, Bryans Road, Indian Head, Nanjemoy, and Cobb Island. The areas of deficiencies were also echoed in the data gathered as part of the Service Analysis outlined in *Section F*.

City planners and park officials can use the Park Equity Mapper to identify communities in need of green space revitalization. Currently there are 5 categories of data.

1. Park Equity Scores
2. Park Equity Factor Layers
3. MD EJScore
4. Context Layers
5. Help (this is the document you are currently reading)

Park Equity Score

This data category includes two-point indicators that map locations for parks and public transportation, and one count indicator that measures the number of park amenities. The eight remaining park equity indicators have scores that are organized into 5 bins or quintiles.



Park Equity Layers

<p>Parks (Context)</p>	<p>This layer shows all park and open spaces reported in the 2019-2023 Land Preservation and Recreation Plan. It includes state parks, state forests, natural resource management areas, natural environmental areas, wildlife management areas, state wildlands, and some federal lands.</p> <p>People-powered recreation - So-called "active" recreation areas whose main purposes are to provide space for physical activities or social gatherings. Parks with this indicator have more People-powered amenities (see next layer) than Nature-based amenities.</p> <p>Nature-based Recreation - Recreation areas whose main purpose is the preservation and promotion of the natural ecosystem or whose main attraction is nature itself. Parks with this indicator have more Nature-based amenities than People-powered amenities.</p> <p>People-powered and Nature-based - Parks with this indicator have an equal number of Nature-based amenities and People-powered amenities.</p>
<p>Park Amenities (Context)</p>	<p>Facilities and/or equipment that enhance the usability of parks. Amenities include access to:</p> <p><u>Nature-based</u> Nature Areas, Water Recreation, Trails, Hunting, Fishing.</p> <p><u>People-powered</u> Picnicking, Playgrounds, Sports Facilities, Waste Receptacles, Restroom Facilities, and No Fees/Reservation Required.</p>
<p>Public Transit (Context)</p>	<p>Maryland Transit Administration (MTA) access via local buses, metro subway, and the Maryland Area Regional Commuter (MARC) train. This data is based upon the Winter 2014 schedule. For more information, see: http://mta.maryland.gov/marc-train.</p> <p>This layer also includes interstate public transit [services] such as Amtrak rail stops and WMATA bus and Metrorail stops.</p>
<p>Park Equity Score</p>	<p>This is a combination of the layers below.</p>



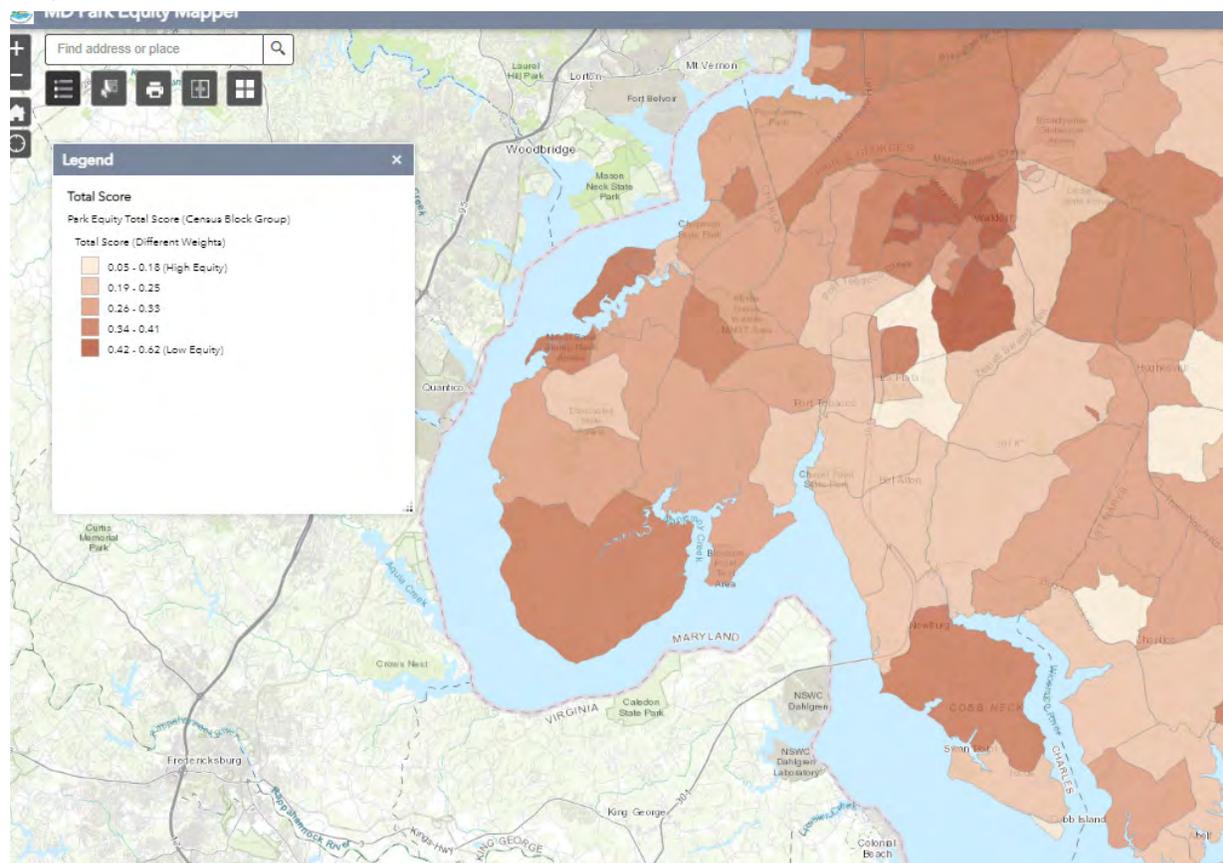
Population Density Score	Number of residents per residential acres (as defined by urban lands in the 2002 Maryland Department of Planning land use/land cover data). Higher density equals a higher score (between 0-10) x 2.
Low Wealth Score	The ratio of household at or below 185% of the county poverty level. The higher ratio equals a higher score. (0-10).
Children Under 18 Score	Ratio of the number of children age 17 & under relative to the total population. The higher ratio equals a higher score. (0-10).
Adults 65 and Older Score	Ratio of the number of adults age 65 & older relative to the total population. The higher ratio equals a higher score. (0-10).
Non-White Score	Ratio of non-white to white individuals in that census tract compared to the average ratio of the state. The higher ratio equals a higher score. (0-10).
Park Distance Score	An average of distances of each location in a block group to the closest park
Public Transit Distance Score	The Public Transit Distance Score is based on the Accessibility Index from the United States Environmental Protection Agency. This is an index of the relative accessibility of a block group compared to other block groups in the same metropolitan region, as measured by travel time to the working-age population via transit. Higher values indicate more accessibility
Walkability Index Score	<p>The Walkability Index Score is based on the US Environmental Protection Agency model which includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> National Walkability Index (relative metric, higher values indicate conditions generally more conducive to pedestrian travel) Employment and household entropy 8-tier employment entropy (denominator set to the static 8 employment types in the CBG) Street intersection density (weighted, auto-oriented intersections eliminated) Distance from population weighted centroid to nearest transit stop (meters) but remember that significant transit capacity has been added since the date of source data used in this analysis (TRAX green line, extensions to other lines, FrontRunner south, etc).
Linguistic Isolation Score	The Linguistic Isolation score is a measure of the number of households in which every member over the age of 14 speaks a non-English language and none speak English "very well".

Source: [MD Park Equity Mapper \(umd.edu\)](http://umd.edu)

Park Equity Total Score (Census Tract)

Darker areas on the map have lower equity than lighter colored areas. Charles County should continue to monitor this mapping and local knowledge to help prioritize future park improvements and land acquisitions in areas that are lower in equity. Areas with darker colors on this map have lower equity than lighter colored areas.

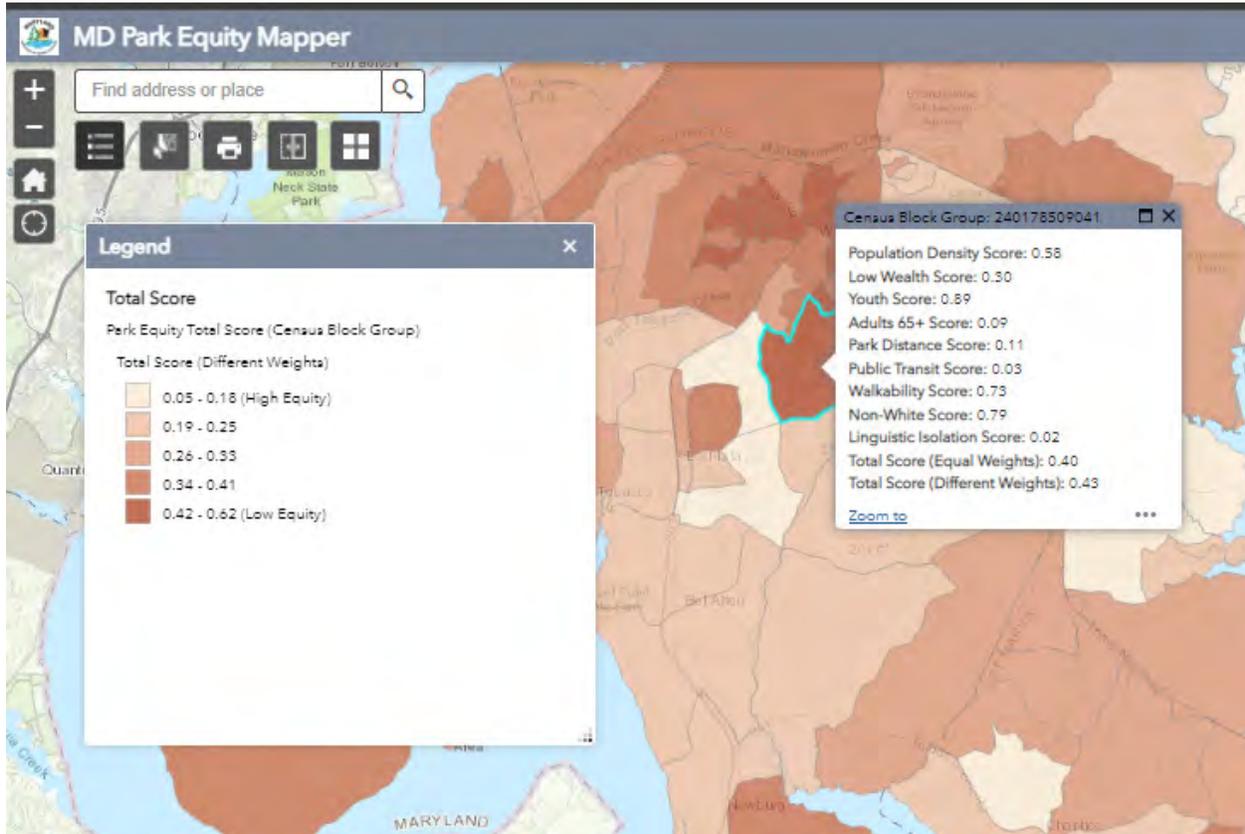
Map 3: Census Blocks



Source: [MD Park Equity Mapper \(umd.edu\)](http://umd.edu)

Charles County may find data from individual areas helpful in prioritization of future improvements or acquisitions. For example, when selecting darker colored areas additional information is displayed related to the overall score for each area.

Map 4: Census Block

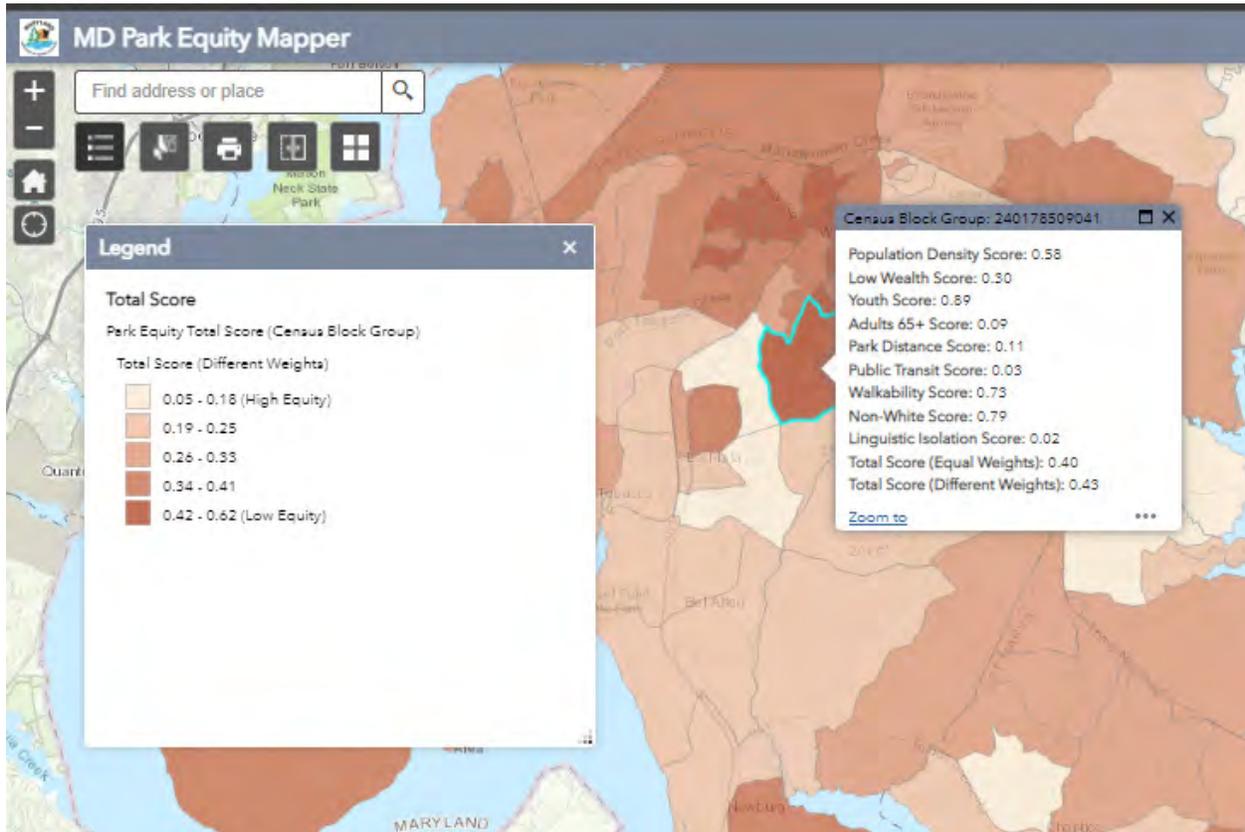


Source: [MD Park Equity Mapper \(umd.edu\)](http://umd.edu)

Park Equity Total Score (County)

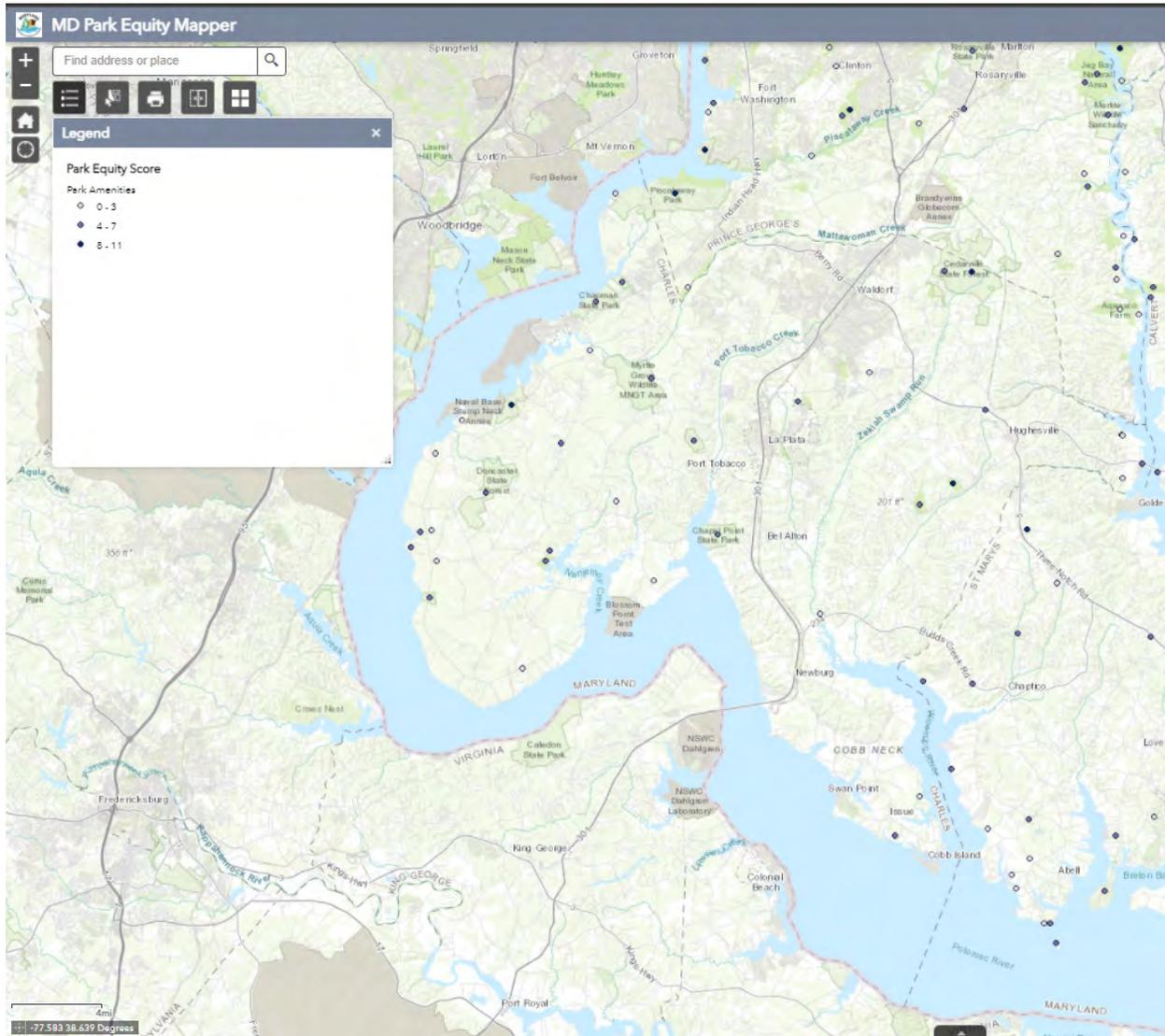
This Statewide comparison shows Charles County at a total score of 0.37 in Park Equity Total Score. Comparisons can be made to other counties based on the darkness of the shading. Note: Prince Georges and Charles Counties are not currently registering a color value.

Map 5: Park Equity Score



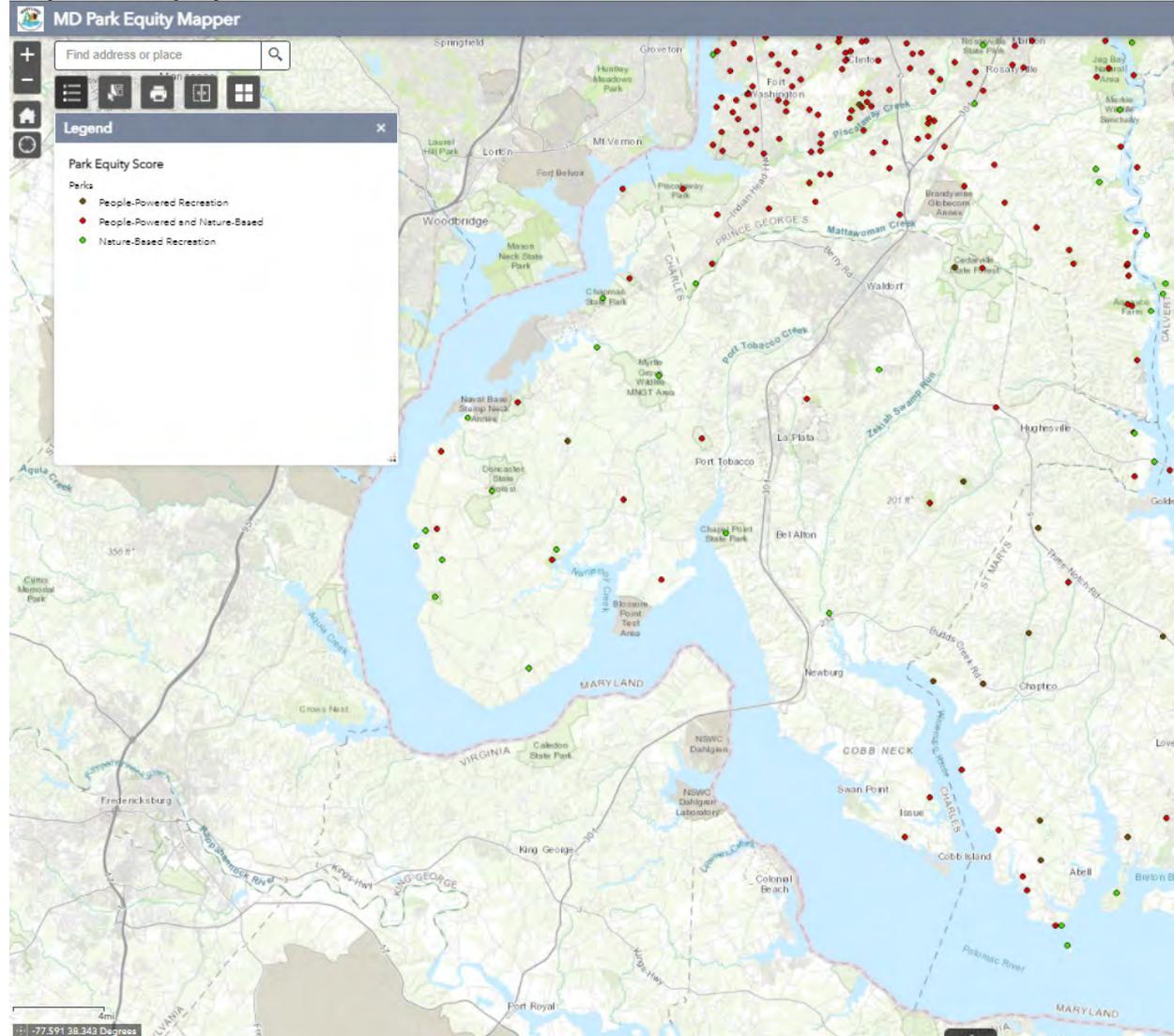
Source: [MD Park Equity Mapper \(umd.edu\)](http://umd.edu)

Map 6: Park Equity Score – Park Amenities



Source: [MD Park Equity Mapper \(umd.edu\)](http://umd.edu)

Map 7: Park Equity Score – Parks

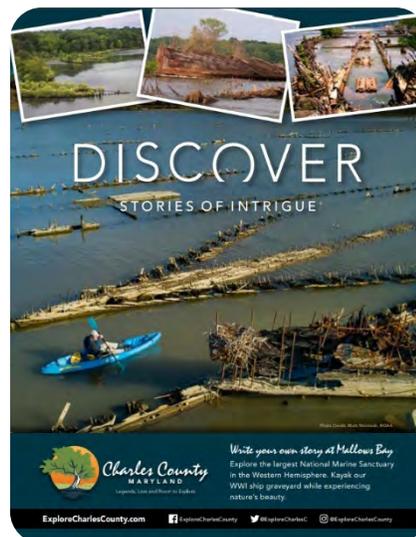


Source: [MD Park Equity Mapper \(umd.edu\)](http://MDParkEquityMapper(umd.edu))

F. Level of Service Analysis

As with the 2017 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan, the 2022 Plan provides updated baseline information regarding the provision of existing public parks and recreation opportunities in Charles County including:

- Inventory of existing public parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces – *Appendix D*
- Measure of acres/population.
- Current perceptions regarding County parks and public recreation opportunities.
- Data regarding usage, demand, and participation in County parks and recreation services.
- Existing and projected County population statistics and trends.
- Review of relevant County programs and funding sources for parks and recreation.
- Feedback and perceptions of staff, stakeholders, and public.



To determine how well public parks, recreation amenities, and open spaces serve the community, the State of Maryland previously required counties to review the capacity of the parks system to meet existing and projected future needs. This had been accomplished primarily through measuring the number of acres of recreation land per 1,000 population and determining if the County's standing in relation to Maryland's (recently retired) default recreational acreage goal for each county to provide at least 30 acres of recreation land per 1,000 residents.

The 2017 "Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan Guidelines" used in the preparation of this Plan diverged from the previous requirements that guided county measurement of the level of service provided by public parks systems. Instead of directing the calculation of acres of recreation land per population, the 2017 Guidelines, "allow the local jurisdictions the flexibility to use a methodology that is useful for them; provided that it makes the case for how the jurisdiction will address the recreational needs of their users" in gauging the level of service provided by existing public parks, recreation amenities, and open space to the community.

Measured Participation in County Parks, Recreation, and Tourism Programs

Given the long tradition of land conservation and strong community ties to the rivers, forests, and farmland in Charles County, it is not surprising that residents and visitors share a deep appreciation of the recreation opportunities afforded by the public parks and open spaces found here. Although no practical means currently exist to track all use of public parks and open spaces in the County, existing data from metrics tracked by the County for FY2021 indicated that there was strong participation in activities and high demand for use of recreation facilities, programs, and services especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The 2020 "Annual Report" highlights the high interest and public participation in County-provided recreation programs, events, and activities for all ages of residents and visitors.

The report focused on goals focused on environmental initiatives for: conservation programs, natural resource management, and environmental management.

In addition to the environmental initiatives, the report notes that quality of life initiatives within recreation and entertainment highlighted by parks and amenities, the stadium, agritourism, festivals, and Popes Creek.

In addition to the County’s annual report, data tracked by the County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism for the period of FY2018 through FY2022 reported the following objectives and measurements for the department:

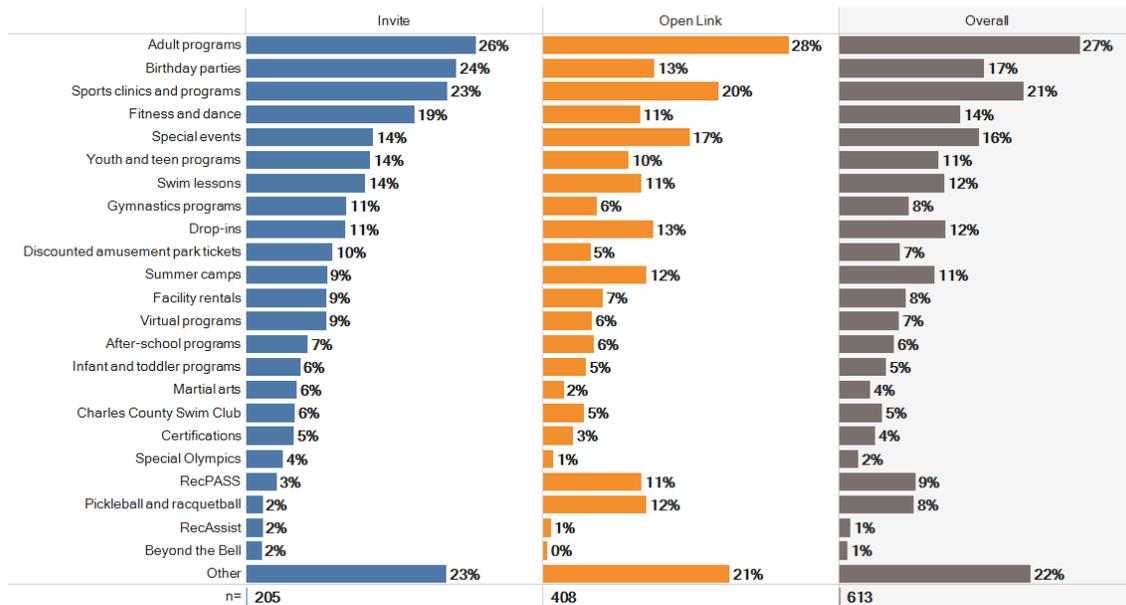
<u>Objectives & Measurements:</u>	<u>FY18</u> Actual	<u>FY19</u> Actual	<u>FY20</u> Actual	<u>FY21</u> Projected	<u>FY22</u> Estimated
<u>Parks: To effectively meet the outdoor recreation / active sports needs of county residents.</u>					
Number of Participants (\$/participant)	17,331	17,286	5,131	17,600	17,600
Average Games per Athletic Field	89	81	44	84	84
• Achieves Commissioners 2019-2021 Goals and Objectives: Goal 5: Quality of Life, Recreation and Entertainment					
<u>Parks: To provide a high level of grounds maintenance to all government buildings to ensure a safe and aesthetically pleasing product.</u>					
Building site acres maintained	890	898	898	910	915
(\$/acre)	\$160/acre	\$160/acre	\$170/acre	\$180/acre	\$180/acre
Number of (acres or sq ft) of field maintained	200	200	210	210	210
(\$/acre)	\$626/acre	\$630/acre	\$635/acre	\$640/acre	\$640/acre
Total Acres of Parkland Maintained	4,195	4,195	4,195	4,195	4,195
• Achieves Commissioners 2019-2021 Goals and Objectives: Goal 5: Quality of Life, Recreation and Entertainment					
<u>Recreation: Implementation of well rounded recreational programs for all ages. Monitor and adjust programs as needed to suit the needs of the Community.</u>					
Total # of Recreation activity registrations	18,722	19,719	15,574	5,000	15,000
% of online vs. traditional registrations	55%	63%	62%	N/A	N/A
Number of Activities Run	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,000	3,000
Number of Memberships Created (RecPass/Punchcards)	N/A	N/A	N/A	1,000	1,500
* FY 20 Actual # of Registration activities registrations decreased due to COVID cancelation effective March 2020.					
* FY 21 projections are reduced due to COVID cancelations/restrictions and the different reporting methods within the new registration software.					
* FY22 projections are a full year estimate with the new reporting methods within the new registration software.					
• Achieves Commissioners 2019-2021 Goals and Objectives: Goal 5: Quality of Life, Recreation and Entertainment					
<u>Tourism: To develop and promote the visitor and travel industry. Promoting programs, events and venues to increase leisure and business visitation.</u>					
Hotel / Motel Tax	\$1,132,755	\$1,185,897	\$951,544	\$970,000	\$1,000,000
Amusement / Admission Tax	\$905,124	\$864,062	\$606,606	\$760,000	\$760,000
• Achieves Commissioners 2019-2021 Goals and Objectives: Goal 5: Quality of Life, Recreation and Entertainment					

Estimated Household Participation in Recreation, Fitness, and Leisure Activities

As detailed in the Needs Assessment Survey in Appendix F, the estimated rate of County household participation in a variety of recreation, fitness, and leisure activities was generally high. In the recreational activities listed on the survey, participation was highest in adult programs, followed by birthday parties, sports clinics and programs, fitness and dance. Other key recreational activities and services that participants participated over the past 12 months are noted below.

Participation in Recreational Activities or Services

Q 8: In what recreational activities or services have you participated in and around Charles County in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply)



Department Perceptions – Engagement Sessions Findings and Survey Results

Staff and Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

On November 1st, 3rd, and 4th 2021, eight focus group sessions were held virtually by the project team to gather feedback and insight from public, staff, and local stakeholders with interests in the County’s provision of parks and recreation services. Participants in focus groups represented federal, State, County, and local government recreation service providers, and a variety of local user groups. Discussions focused on specific challenges, levels of satisfaction, and identification of potential new opportunities associated with their management and/or use of Charles County’s system of public parks, recreation amenities, and open spaces.

Feedback received from the meetings generally focused on topic areas such as strengths, weaknesses, whether there is a need for new programs and amenities, value of parks and recreation in Charles County, underserved areas of the county, as well as what the priorities of the county parks and recreation department should be. Largely, most participants noted a relatively high level of satisfaction with the existing public parks system and variety of recreation opportunities available in Charles County. Responses from both users and providers of public parks and recreation services also suggested areas of recreation service provision that can be improved. As summarized by general topic area, feedback received included:

- **Indoor Recreation Opportunities** in Charles County:
 - A need for an indoor aquatic center
 - The long-standing shared use of recreation facilities at County schools is generally positive. County agencies are working to update their collaborative processes to meet growing demands for facility use for school purposes and public recreation programming.

- The need for multi-use facilities (swimming, gymnasium, youth/adult program space)
- New indoor facilities in the Waldorf area of the County
- **Outdoor Recreation Opportunities** in Charles County:
 - Expanding waterfront and water access areas for public use is seen as desirable. Staff and stakeholders recognized the challenges associated with waterfront land acquisition and future site development.
 - The addition of more canoe/kayak rental opportunities at existing water access sites were suggested by user group representatives and providers.
 - The addition of bike trails, multi-use paths, and walking trails is desired
 - Continue to preserve areas for open space opportunities
 - State parks and natural areas managed by the Maryland Department of Natural Resources were seen as significant recreation assets in the County.
- **Historic and Cultural Resources:**
 - National Park Service sites, historic trails, and other local cultural and historic resources and events could be better leveraged to increase visitors to the County. Thomas Stone National Historic Site reported an increase in visitation due to increased involvement in the community.
 - The enhancement of the visitor experience associated with the sites and story of John Wilkes Booth's time in the County was noted as a potential area for improvement.
 - Agro-tourism and farm to table food concepts were noted as potential means of highlighting the County's strong ties to its farming and fishing industries.
- **Overall level of satisfaction** with public parks and recreation assets in Charles County:
 - County staff and stakeholders both noted high levels of satisfaction with the maintenance and overall condition of the County's parks and open spaces. They are well maintained, beautiful and offer nice settings.
 - Capital and operating funding of County parks and recreation services would benefit from an increase as the demand for facilities and programs continues to rise.
 - Program Open Space funds were considered highly significant to improving the parks and recreation system throughout the County.

Needs Assessment -Online/Open Link Survey Findings

In addition to speaking directly with staff and stakeholders, the residents of the county were invited to participate in the planning process and share their feedback with the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism through a statistically valid survey that was available through random sampling of residents who received a hard copy of the survey in the mail as well as an open link survey that was available online for anyone. The survey consisted of 29 questions, that were managed through RRC Associates. The response rate was quite high with a total of 1,092 completed surveys. Notifications of the survey were accomplished primarily through a press release, email blasts, web site promotion, and social media postings to the thousands

Nearly 70% of online survey respondents reported most commonly using parks and recreation facilities that were close to home – generally no more than 10 miles away.



of park users and program participants signed up for Department’s notifications. The survey was open for anyone to participate from November 29, 2021– January 3, 2022. A report summarizing survey findings is included in *Appendix F*.

Key findings from the survey included:

- **Living in Charles County**

Majority of respondents are long-term residents of Charles County. A total of 72% of the Invite sample have lived in the county over 11 years with an average of 21.5 years. A total of 45% of Invite respondents reside in Waldorf, and 16% in La Plata. The remaining respondents are dispersed across the county.

- **Satisfaction**

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied, 42% of Invite respondents rated their current satisfaction with recreation opportunities in Charles County a 4 or 5. The average rating was 3.2, indicating some area for improvement.

- **Current Usage**

The most frequented locations for the Invite sample include nature/passive parks, regional parks/athletic fields, trails, and historic sites. Open link respondents visit these sites more often. Invite respondents most frequently participate in adult programs, birthday parties, and sports clinics and programs. There are some differences in use by sample type.

- **Proximity to Recreation**

Distance to recreation facilities varies for Invite respondents. About a quarter (25%) travel 1-4 miles to their most visited facility, 38% 5-9 miles away, while another quarter travel 10-19 miles away. Open link respondents tend to travel further to their most visited facility.

- **Communication**

There is room for improvement to better leverage communication efforts and information dissemination about parks and recreation to further create awareness in Charles County. A total of 61% of respondents say that improved communication about Parks and Recreation offerings would assist them in participating more frequently in activities, facilities, and programs. About half of the Invite sample use word of mouth to hear about Parks and Recreation opportunities followed by an online search and the Charles County website. Open link respondents use the variety of communication methods more frequently. The average rating of effectiveness was a 2.6 out of 5 with 5 being “very effective” for the Invite sample.

- **Importance/Quality of Life**

There is strong support for land and agricultural preservation. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being “very important”, all categories related to agricultural and land preservation rated at least a 4.1 for both Invite and Open link respondents. Parks, recreation, and open space are also highly important to respondents, although slightly less than agricultural and land preservation. The top-rated categories (average 4 and above out of 5 in importance) for the Invite sample are the existing parks, recreation and open-space opportunities, recreational programs for youth, and new opportunities for walking, hiking, running, and bicycling.



Trends Influencing the Provision of Parks and Recreation Services in Charles County

Current trends in parks and recreation are included in a detailed study found in Appendix B of this report noting national trends that are likely to influence the County Department Recreation, Parks, and Tourism's provision of parks and recreation services. This study reviewed contemporary issues such as changing demographics, and national participation rates in different sports, fitness, recreation, and leisure activities as well as topics on health and wellness, partnerships with health systems, the ability to interpret data and conservation efforts as developing trends for parks and recreation professionals. Many of these trends are currently taking place in the County. Of the trends and other influencing factors, the following appeared most relevant to the County's provision of public parks, open spaces, and recreation opportunities:

- Participation in paddle sports and other water-based activities has been on the rise. Given Charles County's location in the Washington D.C. metropolitan area, abundant, natural coastal resources, and existing high demand for public waterfront recreation areas and boat access facilities, the County should continue to focus on coastal recreation planning and implementation of natural resource stewardship programs.
- The County's population is growing. Local households are generally young and have a significantly higher average annual median household income when compared to peers in Maryland and nationally. Generally, there are, and will likely continue to be, more County residents who seek out recreation experiences close to home and have the means to fund their household's participation.
- Many trending national sports and recreation program types are already offered by the County's Recreation Division, including exercise and wellness programs, environmental education activities, senior and therapeutic recreation program, and youth and adult sports leagues.
- The national popularity and practicality of trails and bike paths for providing opportunities for the public to walk, run, and cycle outdoors is reflected well in Charles County. These activities are great for personal and public health. Public trails and paths, such as the Indian Head Rail Trail, are key infrastructure that support these activities.
- Outdoor recreation planning and natural resource land conservation efforts can, and should, work hand in hand. These services are complementary, and both equally tied to the high quality of life of residents and meaningful recreation experiences of visitors. Charles County uses the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan as a tool to connect recreation and natural resource land planning. Nature programming and directed public engagement with nature through parks and public open spaces can serve as building blocks of positive individual environmental ethos and foster the next generation of future stewards of Charles County's dynamic landscape, and system of parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.

Outdoor Recreation in Maryland

The outdoor recreation economy in Maryland generates 109,000 direct jobs, \$14 billion in consumer spending, \$4.4 billion in wages and salaries, and \$951 million in state and local tax revenue. Investment in outdoor recreation and nature and heritage tourism economies support many outdoor activities in Maryland.

-Maryland Outdoor Recreation Economic Commission

Economic and Health Benefits of Parks

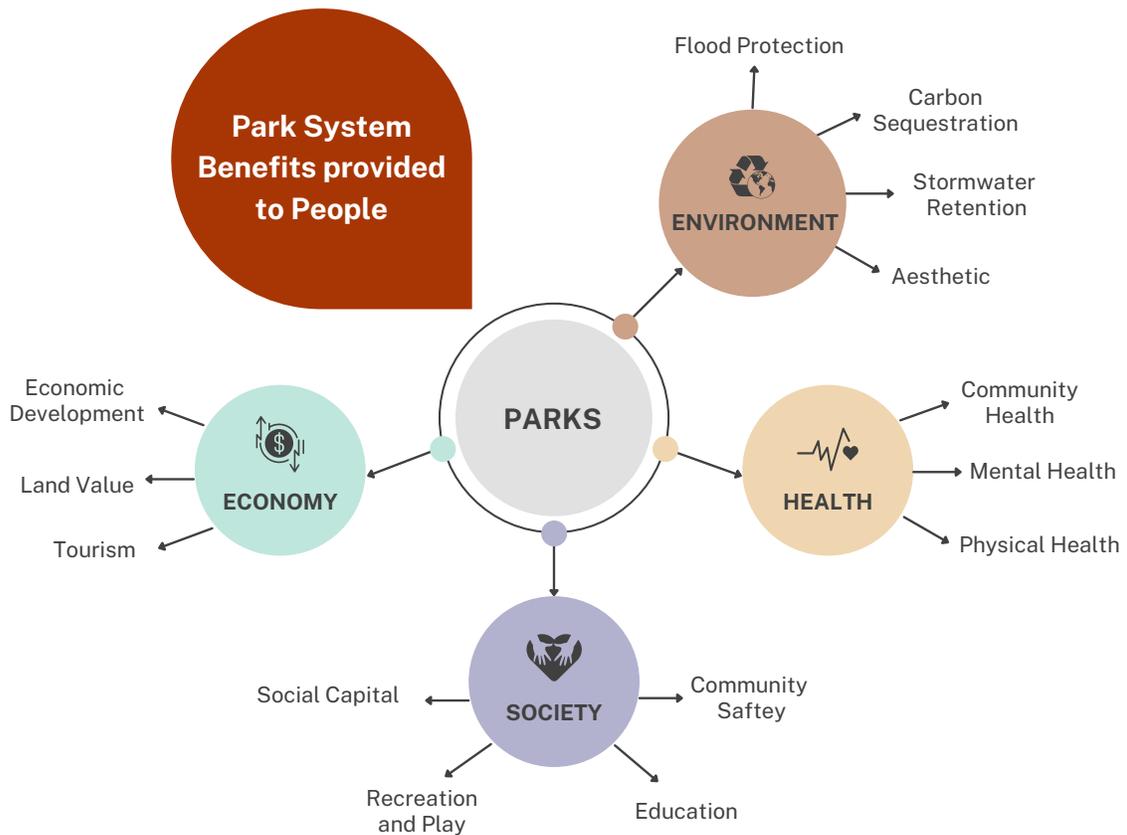
The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space, a report from the Trust for Public Land, makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:²

- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.



² "Benefits of Parks White Paper." The Trust for Public Land, 2018, www.tpl.org/benefits-parks-white-paper. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.

Figure 7: Park System Benefits Provided to People and Communities



Source: *Earth Economics, 2011*

The nationwide economic impacts of public participation in recreation, fitness, and leisure activities are enormous. As measured by the Outdoor Industry Association, a trade association representing over 1,200 outdoor recreation industry entities, in “The Outdoor Recreation Economy,” Americans spent \$689 billion in consumer spending. Most of that spending was estimated to have been on transportation, food, lodging, admissions, and other fees typically associated with participation in an activity with the remaining amount estimated to have been spent on products related to participation, such as apparel, equipment, vehicles, and related services.



Bassmaster Elite Fishing Tournament – August 2016

Image Credit: Smallwood State Park, Maryland DNR <https://twitter.com/SmallwoodSP>

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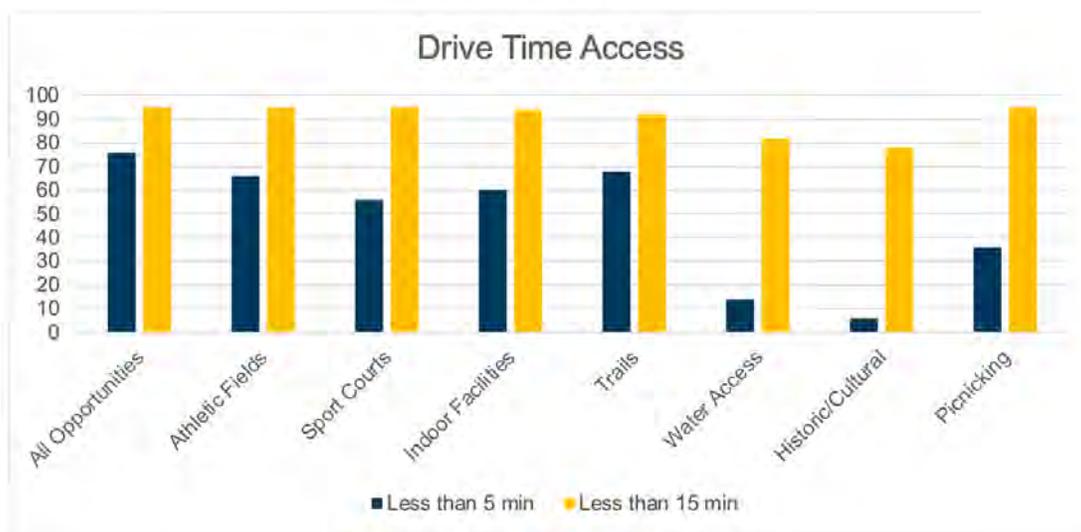
Level of Service Analysis Focus Areas

The level of service analysis completed for this update of the Charles County Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan evaluated how well the system of public parks, recreation amenities and programs, and open spaces in the County appeared to meet the recreational needs of the community. As encouraged by the “Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan Guidelines,” this analysis reviewed multiple focus areas relevant to the County’s provision of lands, facilities, and programs that provide the public with diverse opportunities to recreate and engage with nature.

Public parks and recreation assets are located throughout Charles County. The distribution of these community amenities should ideally provide residents living in all parts of the County with access to recreation opportunities close to where they live. County staff and stakeholders who participated in the planning process identified reliance on the automobile to travel from home to parks and other public recreation amenities. Although participants expected to drive, they did not want to travel for more than 5 to 15 minutes to access a recreation amenity. This level of willingness to travel to access parks and recreation opportunities is used as the basis for measuring the distribution of these assets countywide.

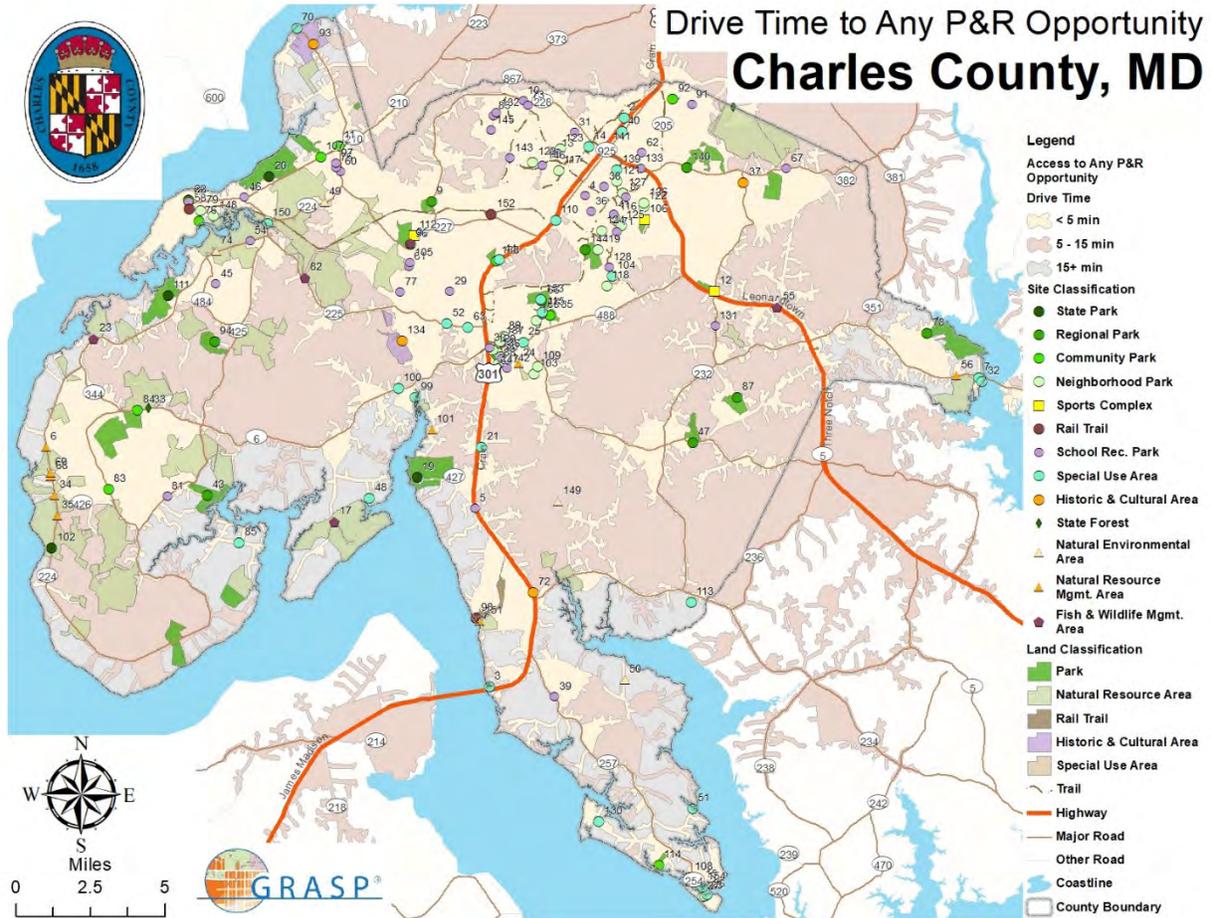
The following series of maps illustrates the distribution of public parks, recreation sites, and open spaces in Charles County. Maps 3-7 illustrate the distribution of sites with specific, popular recreation amenities and areas of the County within 5 and 15- minute drive times of those sites. Areas shown to be within a 5-minute drive of sites are considered to have good access to at least one site with that type of recreation amenity. Areas between a 5 and 15-minute drive from a park or recreation site with a specified amenity were considered to have moderate access to these amenities. Larger, foldout versions of these maps and public recreation asset list are available in *Appendix D*.

Based on the drive time analysis, countywide, residents have good access to various parks, recreation, and open space amenities. Although these areas are distributed throughout the County, more parks and recreation sites are in and around densely populated areas, including Waldorf, to meet local needs. Within these areas, the population is likely to rely less on the automobile and may prefer parks and recreation amenities to be within walking, rather than driving distance from home. The following table summarizes all the drive-time analysis to be presented in the next maps in a single chart. In this chart, the vertical blue and green bars represent the percentage of the residents with 5- and 15-minute drive time access to the various activities or amenities.



Source: BerryDunn, GRASP®, Esri Data Enrichment, US Census

Map 8: Driving Time to all Parks and Recreation Sites

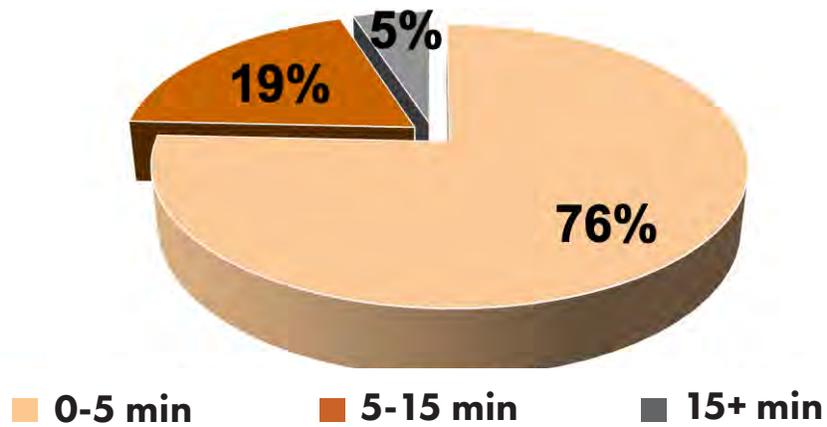


Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

There is at least one park, open space, or recreational facility from most points within the county within a 5-minute drive. It is a slightly longer drive from the county's southwest corner to such facilities. However, all areas within Charles County appeared to be no further than a 15-minute drive from a recreational facility or park. Areas of higher density population are shown to have access to park and recreation opportunities within a 5-minute drive while more rural or lower population density often are found to be within a 15-minute drive in this analysis.

Using GIS and Esri Data Enrichment, analysis include an estimate of the percentage of residents within 0 – 5 min, 5 – 15 min, and 15+ minute drive time areas shown on the map. Colors on the chart correspond to similar colors on the map. The following chart shows those percentages:

% of Population by drive time to any facility



Source: Esri Data Enrichment, BerryDunn, GRASP, Charles County



Parks and recreation sites included in the analysis include:

Map ID	Park or Facility
State Park	
19	Chapel Point State Park
102	Purse State Park
111	Smallwood State Park
20	Chapman State Park
Regional Park	
9	Bensville Park
43	Friendship Farm Park
47	Gilbert Run Park
66	Laurel Springs Park
78	Maxwell Hall Park
87	Oak Ridge Park
140	Waldorf Park
144	White Plains Regional Park & Golf Course
94	Pisgah Park
Sports Complex	
12	Bryantown Soccer Complex
106	Robert Stethem Park
112	Southern Md Youth Org Inc. Fields
Community Park	
11	Bryans Road Park
22	Charlie Wright Park
59	Indian Head Village Green and Senior Center
64	La Plata Farm Park
76	Mattingly Park
83	Nanjemoy Community Center
84	Nanjemoy Community Park
92	Pinefield Park
96	Pomfret Park
107	Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park
114	Southern Park
135	Tilghman Lake Park
136	Town Hall Park
138	Turkey Hill Park
147	Wills Memorial Park



Neighborhood Park

- 1** Agricopia Park
- 16** Carroll La Plata Village
- 27** Cobb Island Park
- 28** Cobb Island Playground
- 53** Hemlock Court
- 79** Meekins Mini-Park
- 88** Patuxent Court Mini-Park
- 89** Phoenix Run Park I
- 90** Phoenix Run Park II
- 103** Redwood Lake
- 109** Silver Linden Park
- 116** St. Charles - Bannister Neighborhood Center
- 117** St. Charles - Dorchester Community Center
- 118** St. Charles - Fieldside Community Center
- 119** St. Charles - Gleneagles Community Center
- 120** St. Charles - Hampshire Community Center
- 121** St. Charles - Huntington Community Ctr.
- 122** St. Charles - Lambeth Hill Lake
- 123** St. Charles - Lancaster Community Center
- 124** St. Charles - Sheffield Community Center
- 125** St. Charles - St. Paul's Lake
- 126** St. Charles - Wakefield Community Ctr.
- 127** St. Charles - Wakefield Lake
- 129** Star Memorial Garden
- 137** Train Station
- 148** Woodland Village Neighborhood Park



School Rec. Park

5	Bel Alton High School
4	Arthur Middleton ES
8	Benjamin Stoddert MS and Stoddert Community Center
10	Berry ES
13	C. Paul Barnhart ES
29	College of Southern Maryland
30	Courthouse Soccer Field
31	Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer ES
36	Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School
38	Dr. Samuel Mudd ES
39	Dr. Thomas Higdon ES & Piccowaxen MS, and Piccowaxen Community Center
41	Eva Turner ES
42	F.B. Gwynn Center
45	Gale Bailey ES
46	General Smallwood MS and Smallwood Community Center
54	Henry E. Lackey HS & Community Pool
57	Indian Head ES
60	J.C. Parks ES
61	James Craik Elementary School
62	John Hanson MS & Community Center & JP Ryon School
65	La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School
67	Malcolm ES
71	Mary Burgess Neal ES
73	Mattawoman Middle School and Mattawoman Community Center
75	Matthew Henson Middle School and Henson Community Center
77	Maurice McDonough HS and Pool
80	Milton M. Somers Middle School and Somers Community Center
81	Mt. Hope-Nanjemoy ES
86	North Point High School & Community Pool
91	Pinefield Future School Site
97	Pomonkey Soccer Complex
105	Robert D. Stethem Educational Center (old VoTech)



School Rec. Park (cont.)

- 128** St. Charles HS & Community Pool
- 131** T.C. Martin ES
- 132** Theodore G. Davis MS & Community Center
- 133** Thomas Stone HS and Pool
- 142** Walter J. Mitchell ES
- 143** Westlake HS
- 145** William A. Diggs ES
- 146** William B. Wade ES and Wade Community Center
- 162** Billingsley ES Community Center

Special Use Area

- 2** AMF Bowling Center
- 3** Aqua Land Campgrounds and Marina
- 7** Benedict Community Park
- 14** Capital Clubhouse
- 15** Captain John's Marina
- 21** Charles County Fairgrounds
- 25** Clarks Senior Center
- 26** Cobb Island Marina (Pirates Dens Marina)
- 32** Desoto/Benedict Marina, Inc.
- 40** Elite Gymnastics & Recreation Center
- 44** Fun Haven Golf
- 48** Goose Bay Marina and Campsites
- 51** Hatton Creek Boat Ramp
- 52** Hawthorne Country Club
- 63** La Plata Park (Legion Fields)
- 70** Marshall Hall Boat Launch Facility
- 85** Nanjemoy Creek Preserve
- 99** Port Tobacco Marina and Campground
- 100** Port Tobacco Recreation Center
- 104** Regency Stadium
- 108** Saunders Marina
- 110** Sky Zone Trampoline Park
- 113** Southern MD ATV Park
- 115** Spring Dell Center
- 130** Swann Point Golf Course
- 139** Unique Sports Academy
- 141** Waldorf Senior Center



Special Use Area (cont.)

- 150** Mason Springs Soft Access Area
- 153** Rosewick Rd./St Charles Parkway
- 154** Shymansky's
- 159** Waldorf NRP Barracks
- 160** Welcome FT

Historic & Cultural Area

- 37** Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House
- 72** Maryland Veterans Museum
- 93** Piscataway Park
- 134** Thomas Stone National Landmark

Rail Trail

- 58** Indian Head Rail Trail
- 98** Pope's Creek Rail Trail
- 152** Rail Trail Parking Middletown Road

State Forest

- 18** Cedarville State Forest
- 33** Doncaster State Forest

Fish & Wildlife Mgmt. Area

- 17** Cedar Point WMA
- 23** Chicamuxen Wildlife Management Area
- 55** Hughesville Pond Fish Management Area
- 69** Nanjemoy Creek WMA
- 69** Nanjemoy Wildlife Mgmt. Area (Wilson Landing Road)
- 82** Myrtle Grove Wildlife Mgmt.. Area
- 95** Pomfret Resource Area
- 161** Riverside WMA

Natural Environmental Area

- 49** Governor Glendening Natural Environmental Area (Chapmans Residual)
- 50** Grove Natural Environmental Area
- 74** Mattawoman Natural Environmental Area
- 149** Zekiah Swamp Natural Environmental Area
- 155** East Catawaba - MET

Natural Resource Mgmt. Area

- 6** Ben Doane Area - Nanjemoy WMA
- 24** Clark Run Natural Area

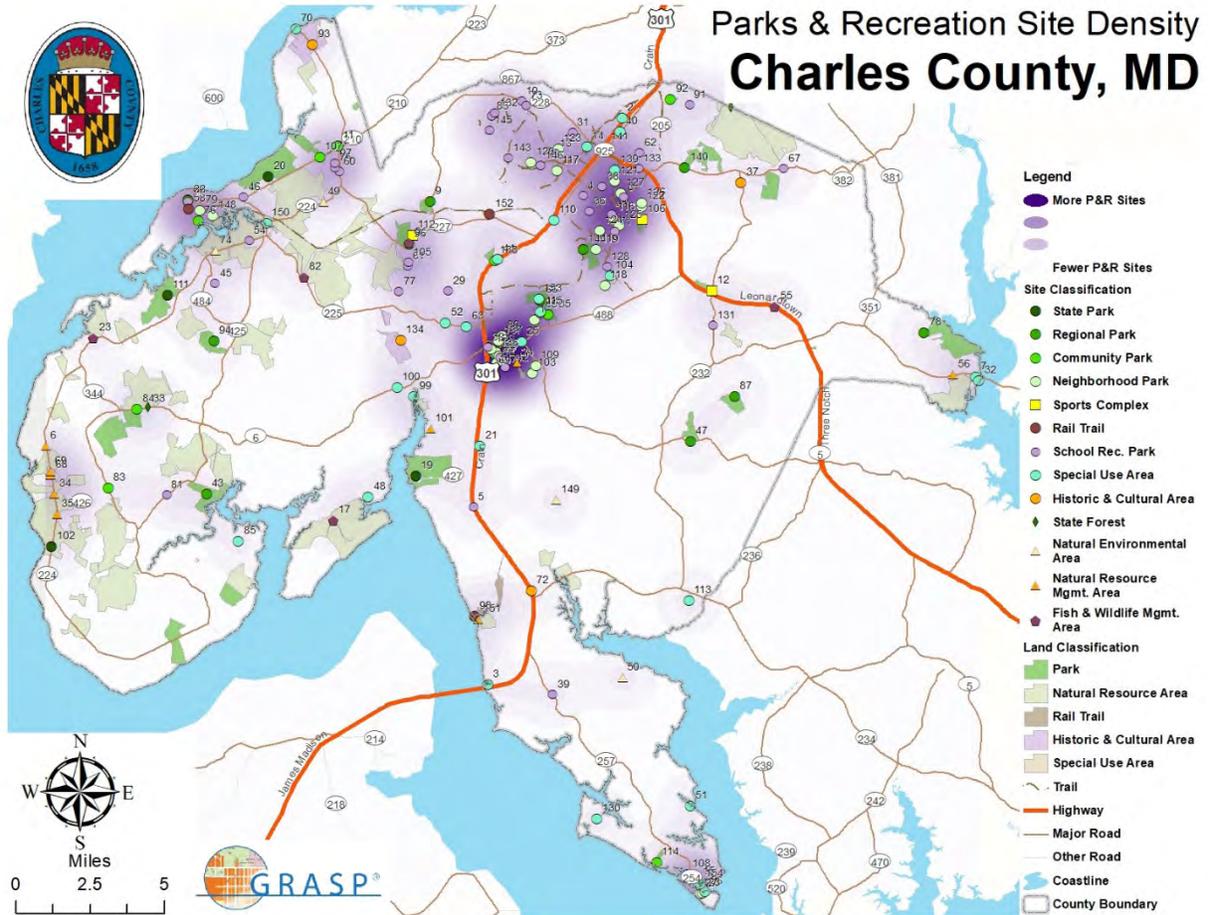


Natural Resource Mgmt. Area (cont.)

- 34** Douglas Point State NRMA
- 35** Douglass Point Special Recreation Area- BLM
- 56** Indian Creek NRMA
- 68** Mallows Bay Park
- 101** Port Tobacco River Park
- 151** Popes Creek Highland Park Property
- 156** Manning Hatchery FMA
- 157** Maxwell Hall NRMA
- 158** Miscellaneous Properties - Southern Region

Map 9 illustrates the density of recreation sites located throughout Charles County. Site illustrated on this map are the same as those included in Map 4, for all parks and recreation sites.

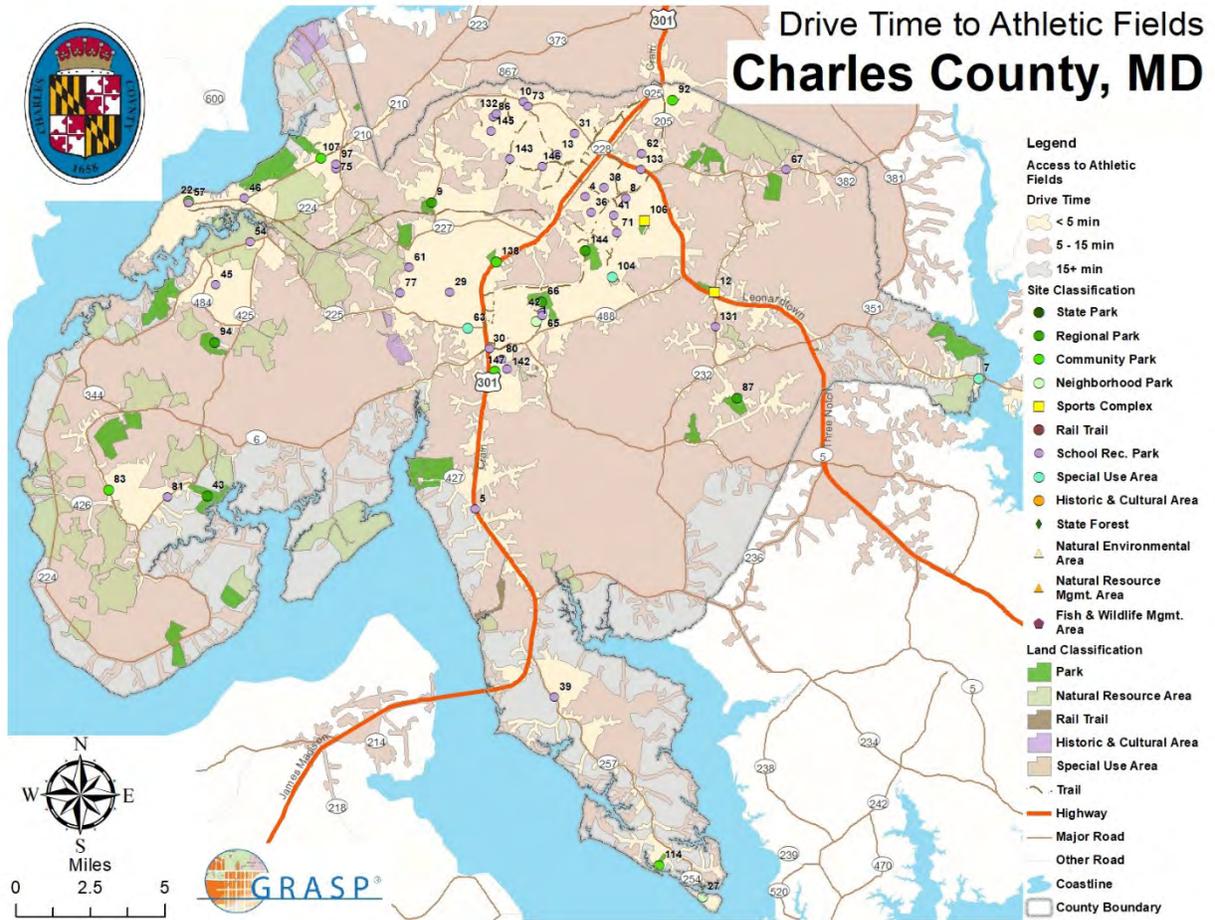
Map 9: Park, Recreation, and Open Space Location Density



Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

Most parks and recreation facilities are in the northern half of the County within or proximate to designated growth areas, including Waldorf and La Plata. Most of these amenities are located at school recreation sites in the Waldorf area.

Map 10: Driving Time to Athletic Fields

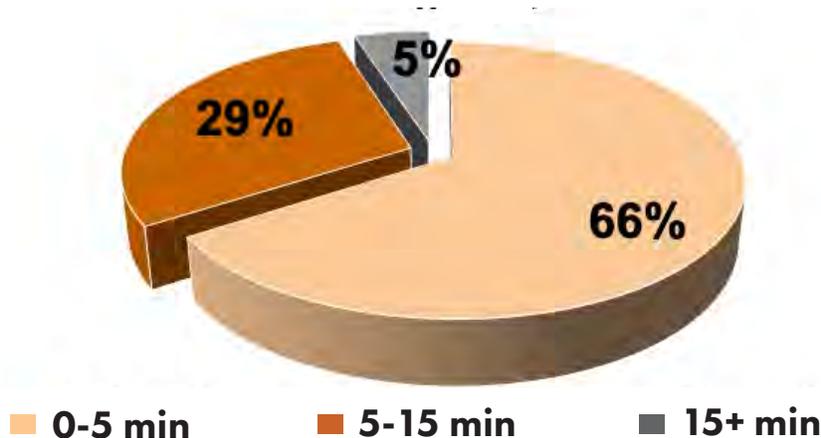


Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

Athletic fields available for public use, and through County programs, were located at several dozen parks, schools, and other recreation sites. Approximately 95 percent of residents are within a 15-minute drive or less of an athletic field.

Colors on the chart correspond to similar colors on the map. The following chart shows those percentages:

% of Population by drive time to Athletic Fields



Source: Esri Data Enrichment, BerryDunn, GRASP, Charles County

Most athletic fields were located at sites proximate to Waldorf and La Plata. Sites with athletic fields included:

Map ID	Park or Facility
Regional Park	
9	Bensville Park
43	Friendship Farm Park
66	Laurel Springs Park
87	Oak Ridge Park
144	White Plains Regional Park & Golf Course
94	Pisgah Park
Sports Complex	
12	Bryantown Soccer Complex
106	Robert Stethem Park
Community Park	
22	Charlie Wright Park
83	Nanjemoy Community Center
92	Pinefield Park
107	Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park
114	Southern Park
138	Turkey Hill Park
147	Wills Memorial Park



Neighborhood Park

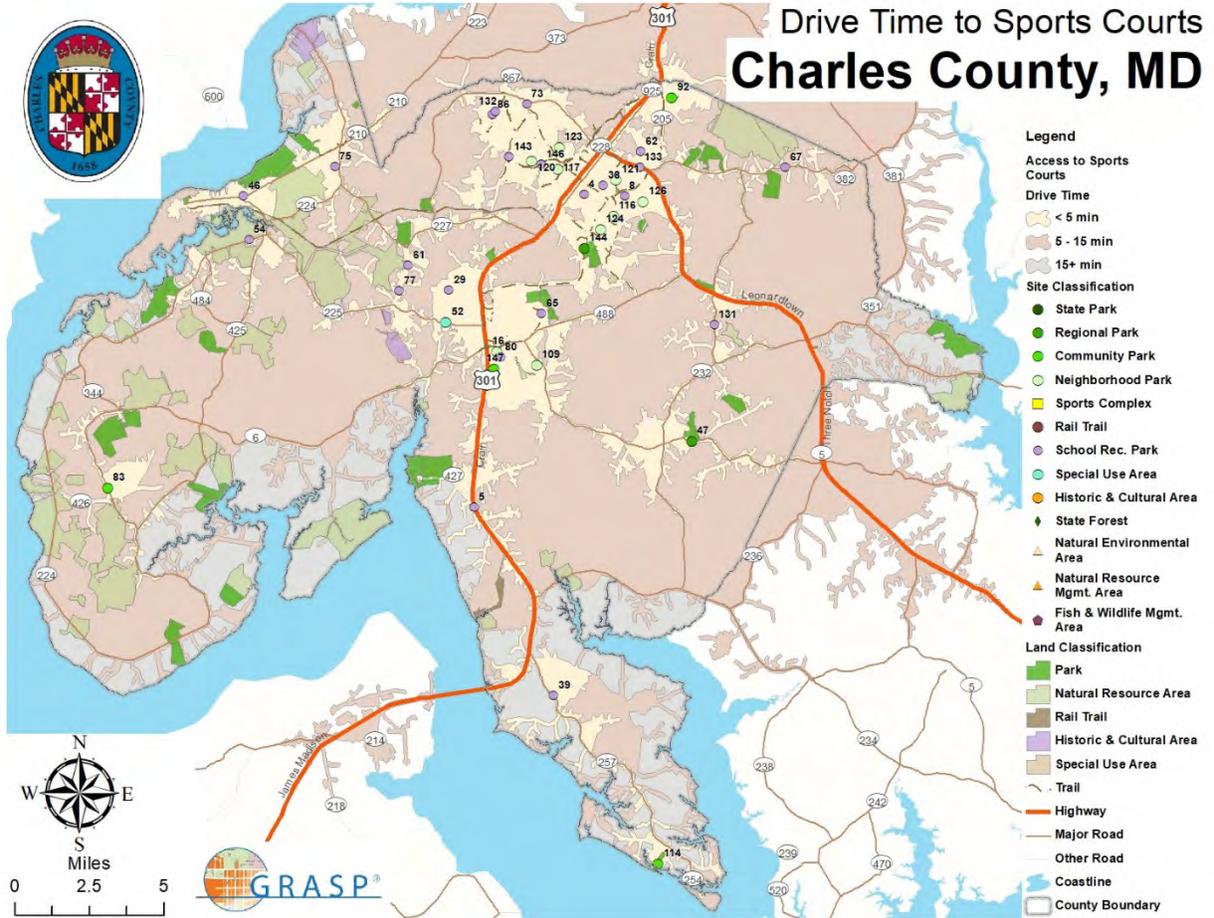
- 1** Agricopia Park
- 27** Cobb Island Park
- 53** Hemlock Court

School Rec. Park

- 5** Bel Alton High School
- 4** Arthur Middleton ES
- 8** Benjamin Stoddert MS and Stoddert Community Center
- 10** Berry ES
- 13** C. Paul Barnhart ES
- 29** College of Southern Maryland
- 30** Courthouse Soccer Field
- 31** Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer ES
- 36** Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School
- 38** Dr. Samuel Mudd ES
- 39** Dr. Thomas Higdon ES & Piccowaxen MS, and Piccowaxen Community Center
- 41** Eva Turner ES
- 42** F.B. Gwynn Center
- 45** Gale Bailey ES
- 46** General Smallwood MS and Smallwood Community Center
- 54** Henry E. Lackey HS & Community Pool
- 57** Indian Head ES
- 61** James Craik Elementary School
- 62** John Hanson MS & Community Center & JP Ryon School
- 65** La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School
- 67** Malcolm ES
- 71** Mary Burgess Neal ES
- 73** Mattawoman Middle School and Mattawoman Community Center
- 75** Matthew Henson Middle School and Henson Community Center
- 77** Maurice McDonough HS and Pool
- 80** Milton M. Somers Middle School and Somers Community Center
- 81** Mt. Hope-Nanjemoy ES
- 86** North Point High School & Community Pool
- 97** Pomonkey Soccer Complex
- 131** T.C. Martin ES
- 132** Theodore G. Davis MS & Community Center
- 133** Thomas Stone HS and Pool
- 142** Walter J. Mitchell ES
- 143** Westlake HS

- 145 William A. Diggs ES
 - 146 William B. Wade ES and Wade Community Center
- Special Use Area**
- 7 Benedict Community Park

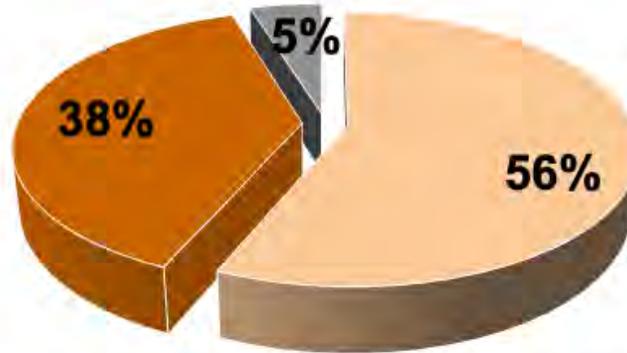
Map 11: Driving Distance to Sport Courts (Basketball, Tennis, Volleyball)



Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

County school sites, community centers, and several parks in the Waldorf and La Plata area provide a mix of indoor and outdoor sport courts that include basketball, tennis, and volleyball with opportunities for public use. Within this northern area, and extreme southern portion of the County, basketball courts are generally accessible within a 15-minute drive of most locations and approximately 95% of residents.

% of Population by drive time to sport courts



■ **0-5 min**
 ■ **5-15 min**
 ■ **15+ min**

Outdoor sites with courts included:

Map ID	Park or Facility
Regional Park	
47	Gilbert Run Park
144	White Plains Regional Park & Golf Course
Community Park	
83	Nanjemoy Community Center
92	Pinefield Park
114	Southern Park
147	Wills Memorial Park
Neighborhood Park	
16	Carroll La Plata Village
109	Silver Linden Park
116	St. Charles - Bannister Neighborhood Center
117	St. Charles - Dorchester Community Center
120	St. Charles - Hampshire Community Center
121	St. Charles - Huntington Community Ctr.
123	St. Charles - Lancaster Community Center
124	St. Charles - Sheffield Community Center
126	St. Charles - Wakefield Community Ctr.
School Rec. Park	
5	Bel Alton High School
4	Arthur Middleton ES
8	Benjamin Stoddert MS and Stoddert Community Center
29	College of Southern Maryland
38	Dr. Samuel Mudd ES

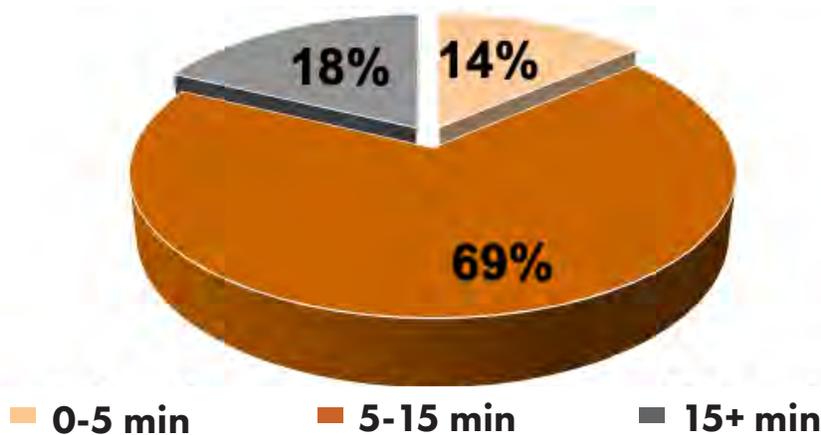


- 39** Dr. Thomas Higdon ES & Piccowaxen MS, and Piccowaxen Community Center
- 46** General Smallwood MS and Smallwood Community Center
- 54** Henry E. Lackey HS & Community Pool
- 61** James Craik Elementary School
- 62** John Hanson MS & Community Center & JP Ryon School
- 65** La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School
- 67** Malcolm ES
- 73** Mattawoman Middle School and Mattawoman Community Center
- 75** Matthew Henson Middle School and Henson Community Center
- 77** Maurice McDonough HS and Pool
- 80** Milton M. Somers Middle School and Somers Community Center
- 86** North Point High School & Community Pool
- 131** T.C. Martin ES
- 132** Theodore G. Davis MS & Community Center
- 133** Thomas Stone HS and Pool
- 143** Westlake HS
- 146** William B. Wade ES and Wade Community Center

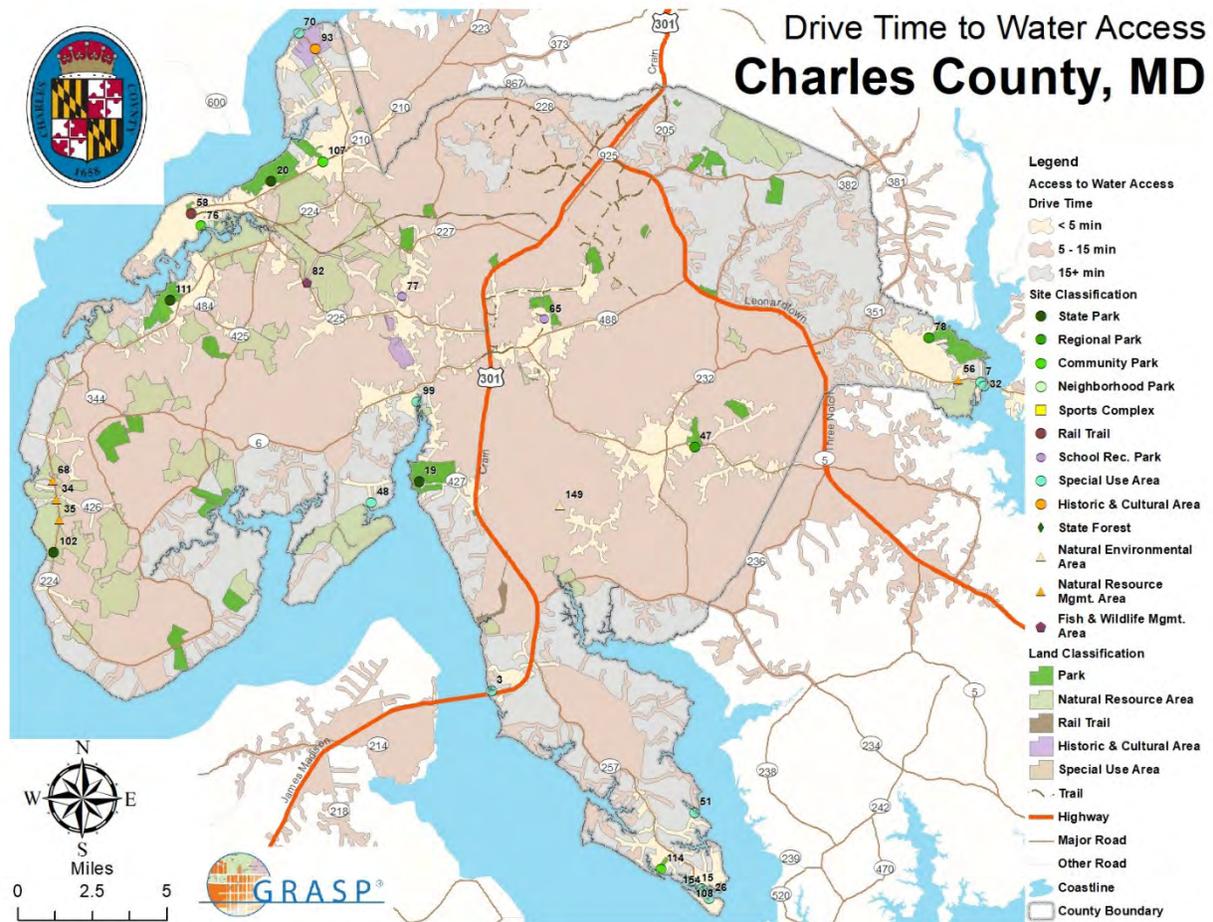
Special Use Area

- 52** Hawthorne Country Club

% of Population by Drive Time to Water Access



Map 12: Drive Time to Water Access



Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

The following sites provide boating access for canoes, kayaks, and larger trailered watercraft. Water trails as recognized by Maryland DNR have also been included in this mapping. Most of these launch areas are in southern and western areas. Enhancing water access for the public has been a long-term goal of Charles County and many other Chesapeake Bay communities. Currently it is estimated that 86% of residents have access within a 15-min drive but only 14% within a 5-minute drive.

It should also be noted that there are several water access points in Prince George’s County, Calvert County and St. Mary’s County that may serve Charles County residents within a 15-minute drive. These were not included in this specific drive time analysis.

Sites with public water access included:

Map ID	Park or Facility	Detail	Comments
State Park			
19	Chapel Point State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapel Point State Park 	
102	Purse State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nanjemoy Wildlife Mgmt. Area (Formerly Purse State Park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term this access site is a beach area and a 1/2-mile portage from the parking site along a wooded, natural surface trail is necessary to access the put-in point here.
111	Smallwood State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden Point Marina/ Smallwood State Park boat ramps - 111.1 Smallwood State Park soft launch - 111.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat ramps are only open during park hours. Boat access is available only open during park hours.
20	Chapman State Park		
Regional Park			
47	Gilbert Run Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilbert Run Park Boat Ramp -47.1 Gilbert Run Park Soft Launch -47.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilbert Run Park is open from March to November. Gilbert Run Park is open from March to November.
78	Maxwell Hall Park		
Community Park			
76	Mattingly Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattingly Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional parking for 11 trailers, 12 cars, 1 handicap, and permanent restrooms are available on a paved lot with lighting within 200 feet of the boat ramp at Mattingly Park. The two piers at the water are each attached to ADA accessible docks. ADA access
107	Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park		
114	Southern Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern Park and Pier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This site also has a playground, picnic areas, ball fields, tennis courts, fishing pier.



School Rec. Park

- 65** La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School
- 77** Maurice McDonough HS and Pool
 - Benedict Community Park
 - Access to the water is under the bridge on the south side. Parking is along the road shoulder. Use caution if crossing the road.

Special Use Area

- 3** Aqua Land Campgrounds and Marina
- 7** Benedict Community Park
- 15** Captain John's Marina
- 26** Cobb Island Marina (Pirates Dens Marina)
- 32** Desoto/Benedict Marina, Inc. Friendship Landing
 - Friendship Landing Boat Ramp -200.1
 - Friendship Landing soft access -200.2
 - The floating soft launch located to the left of the boat ramp and is a separate structure from the boat ramp and dock area
- 48** Goose Bay Marina and Campsites
- 51** Hatton Creek Boat Ramp
 - Hatton Creek
 - Single-lane ramp for small boat access. Good kayak area. Open year-round.
- 70** Marshall Hall Boat Launch Facility
 - Marshall Hall
 - This access site is open from dawn to dusk all year round and is free to the public. There are approximately 10 spaces in a grass overflow park area.
- 108** Port Tobacco Marina and Campground Saunders Marina
- 150** Mason Springs Soft Access Area
 - Mason Springs soft access
 - This site is for fishing and non-motorized vessel access only. Portage of approximately 75 yds., along a dirt path, is required to reach the access point from the parking lot. The access site is along the unimproved natural shoreline approximately 80 feet
- 154** Shymansky's



Historic & Cultural Area

- 93** Piscataway Park
 - Piscataway Park
 - This site is appropriate for smaller boats. There is no fee to use this site.

Rail Trail

- 58** Indian Head Rail Trail

Fish & Wildlife Mgmt. Area

- 82** Myrtle Grove Wildlife Mgmt.. Area
 - Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area
 - This site open seven days a week throughout the year. The WMA is primarily used for hunting, but non-hunting visitors are welcome. Be aware of open hunting seasons and visit accordingly.
 - Fishing for large-mouth bass, bluegills, pickerel, catfish is av

Natural Environmental Area

- 149** Zekiah Swamp Natural Environmental Area

Natural Resource Mgmt. Area

- 34** Douglas Point State NRMA
- 35** Douglass Point Special Recreation Area- BLM
- 56** Indian Creek NRMA
- 68** Mallows Bay Park
 - Mallows Bay Boat Ramp -68.1
 - Mallows Bay Soft Launch -68.2
 - Single-lane concrete ramp for small boat access. Open year-round. A separate floating soft launch is located to the right of the boat ramp.
 - The floating soft access site is to the right of the single lane concrete boat ramp



Map ID	Park or Facility	Detail	Comments
State Park			
19	Chapel Point State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chapel Point State Park 	
102	Purse State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nanjemoy Wildlife Mgmt. Area (Formerly Purse State Park) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The term this access site is a beach area and a 1/2-mile portage from the parking site along a wooded, natural surface trail is necessary to access the put-in point here.
111	Smallwood State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sweden Point Marina/ Smallwood State Park boat ramps - 111.1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat ramps are only open during park hours.
20	Chapman State Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Smallwood State Park soft launch - 111.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Boat access is available only open during park hours.
Regional Park			
47	Gilbert Run Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilbert Run Park Boat Ramp -47.1 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilbert Run Park is open from March to November.
78	Maxwell Hall Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilbert Run Park Soft Launch -47.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Gilbert Run Park is open from March to November.
Community Park			
76	Mattingly Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mattingly Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Additional parking for 11 trailers, 12 cars, 1 handicap, and permanent restrooms are available on a paved lot with lighting within 200 feet of the boat ramp at Mattingly Park. The two piers at the water are each attached to ADA accessible docks. ADA access
107	Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park		
114	Southern Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Southern Park and Pier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This site also has a playground, picnic areas, ball fields, tennis courts, fishing pier.
School Rec. Park			
65	La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School		
77	Maurice McDonough HS and Pool		



Special Use Area

3	Aqua Land Campgrounds and Marina		
7	Benedict Community Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benedict Community Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to the water is under the bridge on the south side. Parking is along the road shoulder. Use caution if crossing the road.
15	Captain John's Marina		
26	Cobb Island Marina (Pirates Dens Marina)		
32	Desoto/Benedict Marina, Inc. Friendship Landing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friendship Landing Boat Ramp -200.1 • Friendship Landing soft access -200.2 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The floating soft launch located to the left of the boat ramp and is a separate structure from the boat ramp and dock area
48	Goose Bay Marina and Campsites		
51	Hatton Creek Boat Ramp	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hatton Creek 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-lane ramp for small boat access. Good kayak area. Open year-round.
70	Marshall Hall Boat Launch Facility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marshall Hall 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This access site is open from dawn to dusk all year round and is free to the public. There are approximately 10 spaces in a grass overflow park area.
99	Port Tobacco Marina and Campground		
108	Saunders Marina		
150	Mason Springs Soft Access Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mason Springs soft access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This site is for fishing and non-motorized vessel access only. Portage of approximately 75 yds., along a dirt path, is required to reach the access point from the parking lot. The access site is along the unimproved natural shoreline approximately 80 feet
154	Shymansky's		

Historic & Cultural Area

93	Piscataway Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Piscataway Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This site is appropriate for smaller boats. There is no fee to use this site.
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Rail Trail

58	Indian Head Rail Trail
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Fish & Wildlife Mgmt. Area

- | | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| 82 | Myrtle Grove Wildlife Mgmt.. Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Myrtle Grove Wildlife Management Area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This site open seven days a week throughout the year. The WMA is primarily used for hunting, but non-hunting visitors are welcome. Be aware of open hunting seasons and visit accordingly. • Fishing for large-mouth bass, bluegills, pickerel, catfish is av |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|--|

Natural Environmental Area

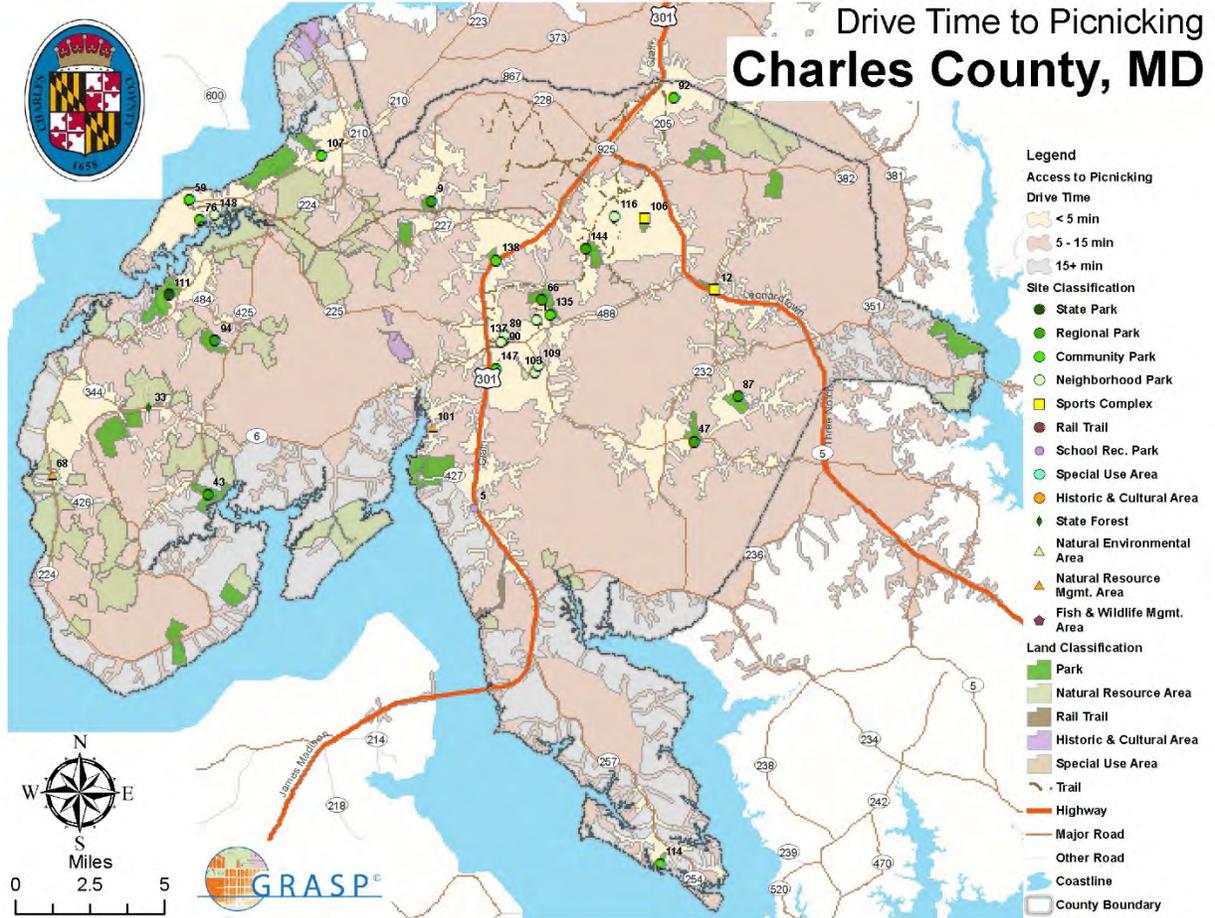
- | | |
|-----|---|
| 149 | Zekiah Swamp Natural Environmental Area |
|-----|---|

Natural Resource Mgmt. Area

- | | | | |
|----|---|--|--|
| 34 | Douglas Point State NRMA | | |
| 35 | Douglass Point Special Recreation Area- BLM | | |
| 56 | Indian Creek NRMA | | |
| 68 | Mallows Bay Park | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mallows Bay Boat Ramp -68.1 • Mallows Bay Soft Launch -68.2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single-lane concrete ramp for small boat access. Open year-round. A separate floating soft launch is located to the right of the boat ramp. • The floating soft access site is to the right of the single lane concrete boat ramp |



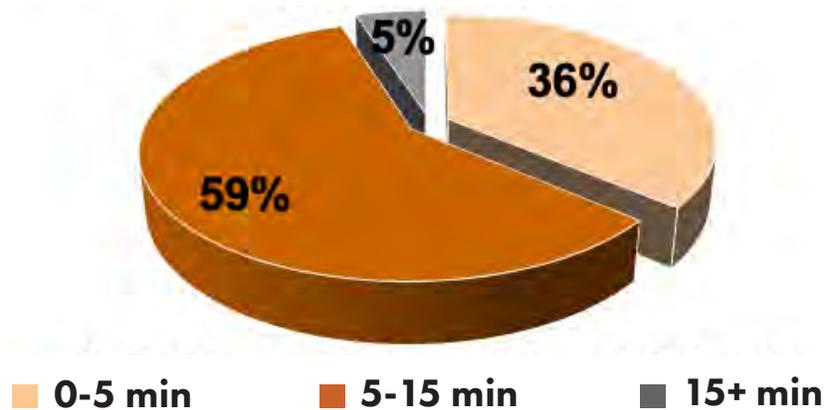
Map 13: Driving Times to Picnic Sites



Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

Over two dozen sites in Charles County provide picnic areas and/or pavilions for public use. Approximately 95% of the County residents are within a 15-minute drive of a picnic facility.

% of Population by Drive Time to Picnic Opportunities



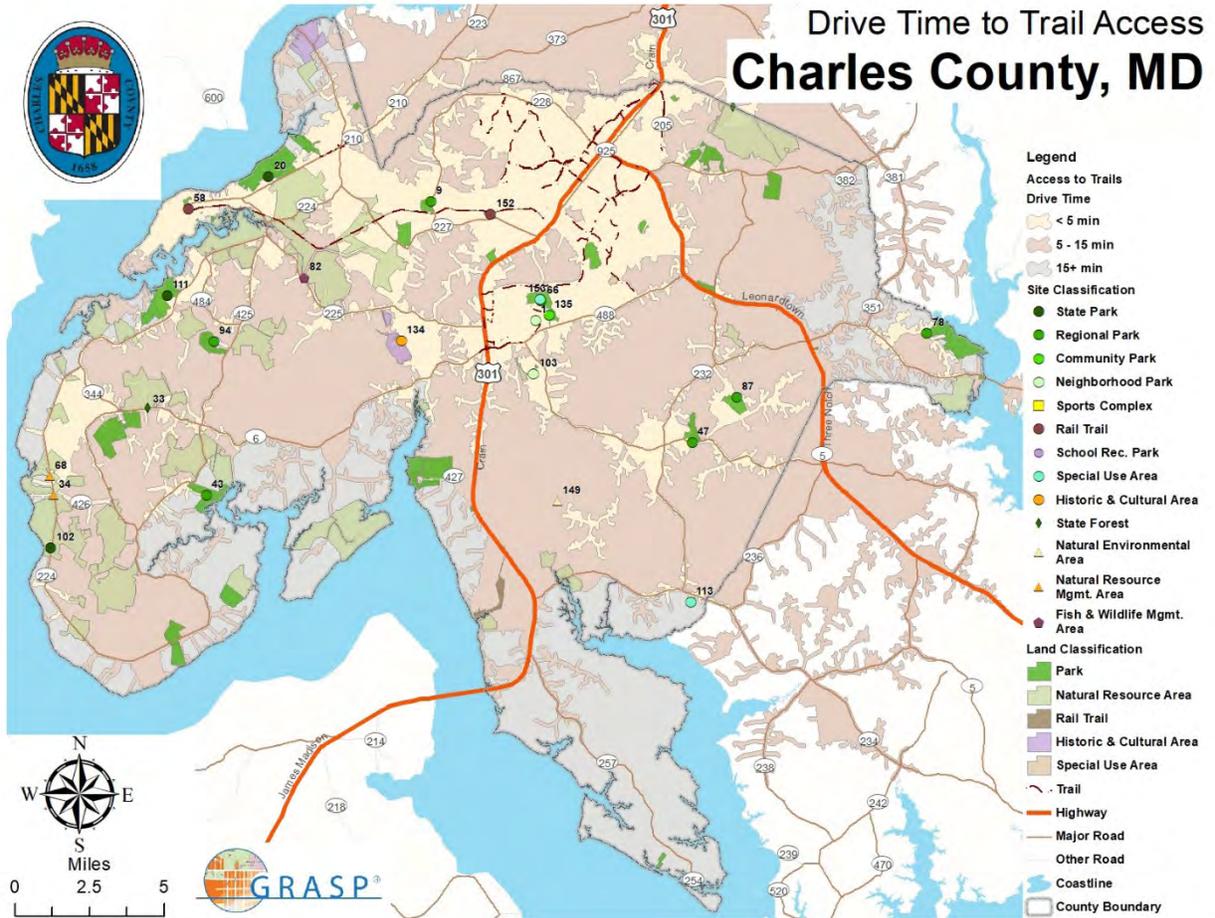
Public picnic areas can be found at the following sites in Charles County:

Map ID	Park or Facility
State Park	
111	Smallwood State Park
Regional Park	
9	Bensville Park
43	Friendship Farm Park
47	Gilbert Run Park
66	Laurel Springs Park
87	Oak Ridge Park
144	White Plains Regional Park & Golf Course
94	Pisgah Park
Sports Complex	
12	Bryantown Soccer Complex
106	Robert Stethem Park
Community Park	
59	Indian Head Village Green and Senior Center
76	Mattingly Park
92	Pinefield Park
107	Ruth B. Swann Memorial Park
114	Southern Park
135	Tilghman Lake Park
138	Turkey Hill Park
147	Wills Memorial Park
Neighborhood Park	
1	Agricopia Park
89	Phoenix Run Park I
90	Phoenix Run Park II
103	Redwood Lake
109	Silver Linden Park
116	St. Charles - Bannister Neighborhood Center
137	Train Station
148	Woodland Village Neighborhood Park
School Rec. Park	
5	Bel Alton High School
State Forest	
18	Cedarville State Forest
33	Doncaster State Forest

Natural Resource Mgmt. Area

- 68** Mallows Bay Park
- 101** Port Tobacco River Park

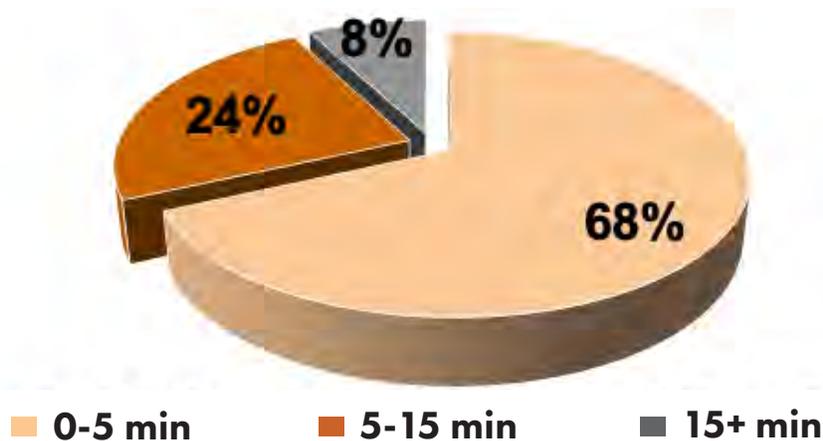
Map 14: Driving Time to Sites with Trails



Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

The national popularity and practicality of trails and bike paths for providing opportunities for the public to walk, run, and cycle outdoors is reflected well in Charles County. There are public parks and natural areas in the County that provided dedicated trails. Trail systems within the County are well used. Statewide and throughout Southern Maryland, there is an increased focus on using trails to build pedestrian and bicycle friendly connections between the places people live, work, play, and shop.

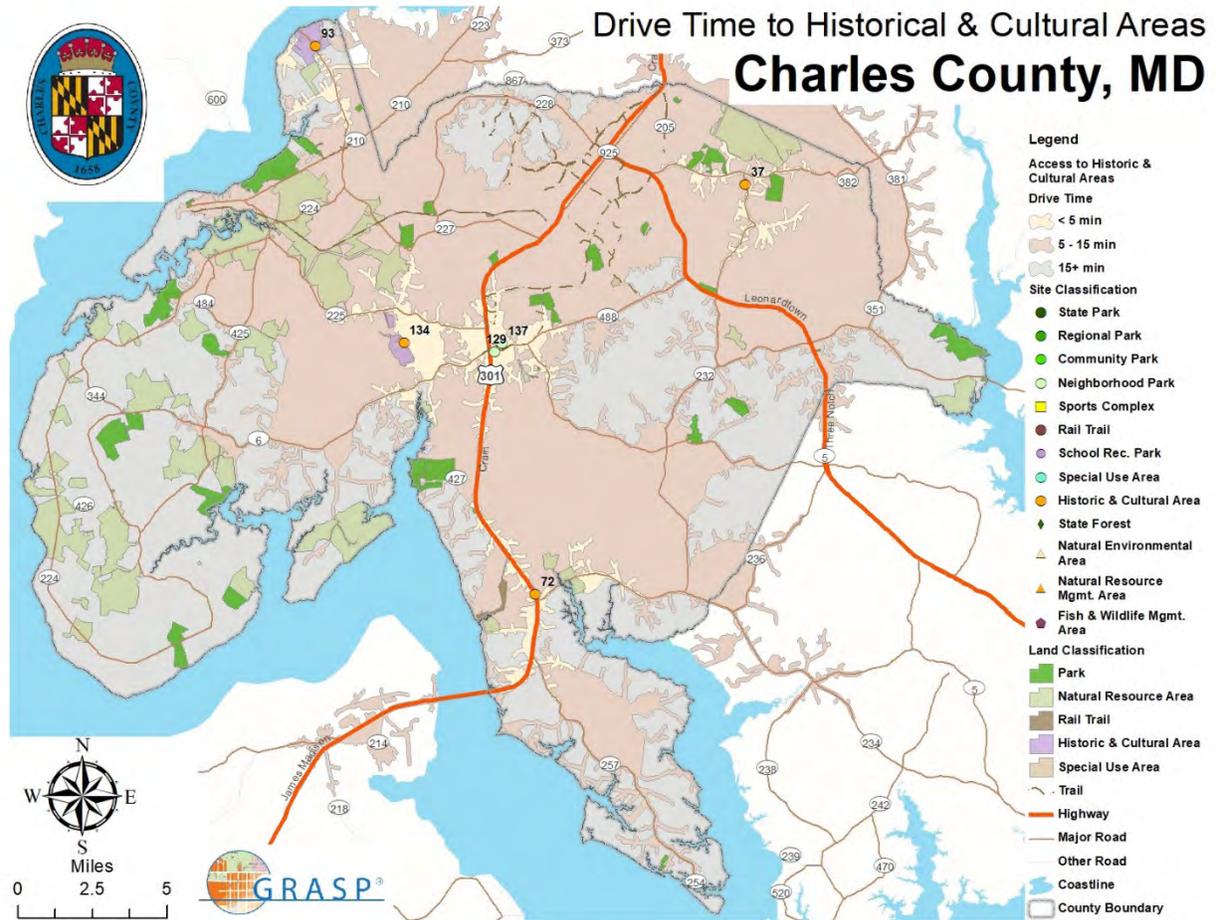
% of Population by Drive Time to Trails



As shown in the chart above many trails exist near large population centers as well as at destination farther away. Most of the mid-section of the County is within a 5-minute drive of a park or open space with trails. Portions in the northeast and southwestern areas of the County were within a 15-minute drive of a site with trails. The southernmost portion of the County was more than 15minutes away from the nearest site with a dedicated publicly accessible trails system. Existing trail types in Charles County ranged from simple natural-surfaced hiking trails to the Indian Head Rail Trail, a 13-mile long, paved multiple-use trail extending from the Town of Indian Head, eastward to White Plains. The Indian Head Rail Trail is heavily utilized and serves as a key regional piece of pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. Designated publicly accessible trails in Charles County can be found at sites including:

- | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------------------|------------|---|
| 1 | Agricopia Park | 87 | Oak Ridge Park |
| 9 | Bensville Park | 94 | Pisgah Park |
| 18 | Cedarville State Forest | 102 | Purse State Park |
| 20 | Chapman State Park | 152 | Rail Trail Parking Middletown Road |
| 33 | Doncaster State Forest | 103 | Redwood Lake |
| 34 | Douglas Point State NRMA | 153 | Rosewick Rd./St Charles Parkway |
| 43 | Friendship Farm Park | 111 | Smallwood State Park |
| 47 | Gilbert Run Park | 113 | Southern MD ATV Park |
| 58 | Indian Head Rail Trail | 134 | Thomas Stone National Landmark |
| 66 | Laurel Springs Park | 135 | Tilghman Lake Park |
| 68 | Mallows Bay Park | 149 | Zekiah Swamp Natural Environmental Area |
| 78 | Maxwell Hall Park | | |
| 82 | Myrtle Grove Wildlife Mgmt. Area | | |

Map 15: Driving Time to Historical and Cultural Features

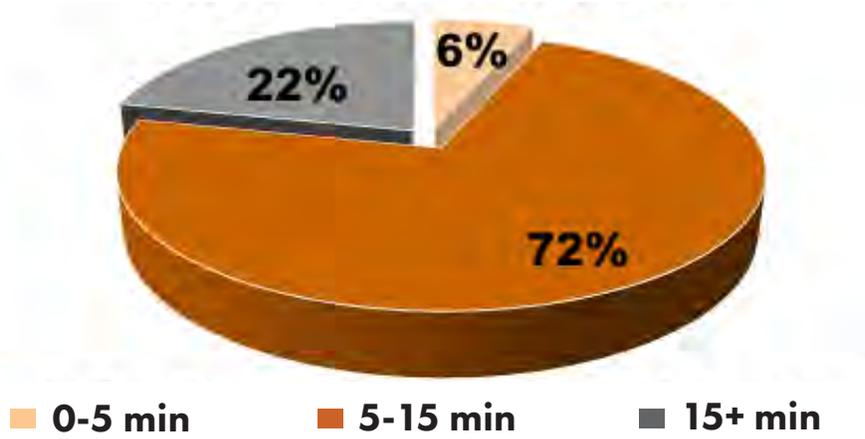


Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

There are limited historical and cultural offerings in Charles County. Based on the drive-time analysis they are the least accessible offering among those studied. Still, nearly 80% of the population has access to a historical or cultural feature within a 15-minute drive as shown on the map and in the chart below.



% of Population by Drive Time to Historic/Cultural areas

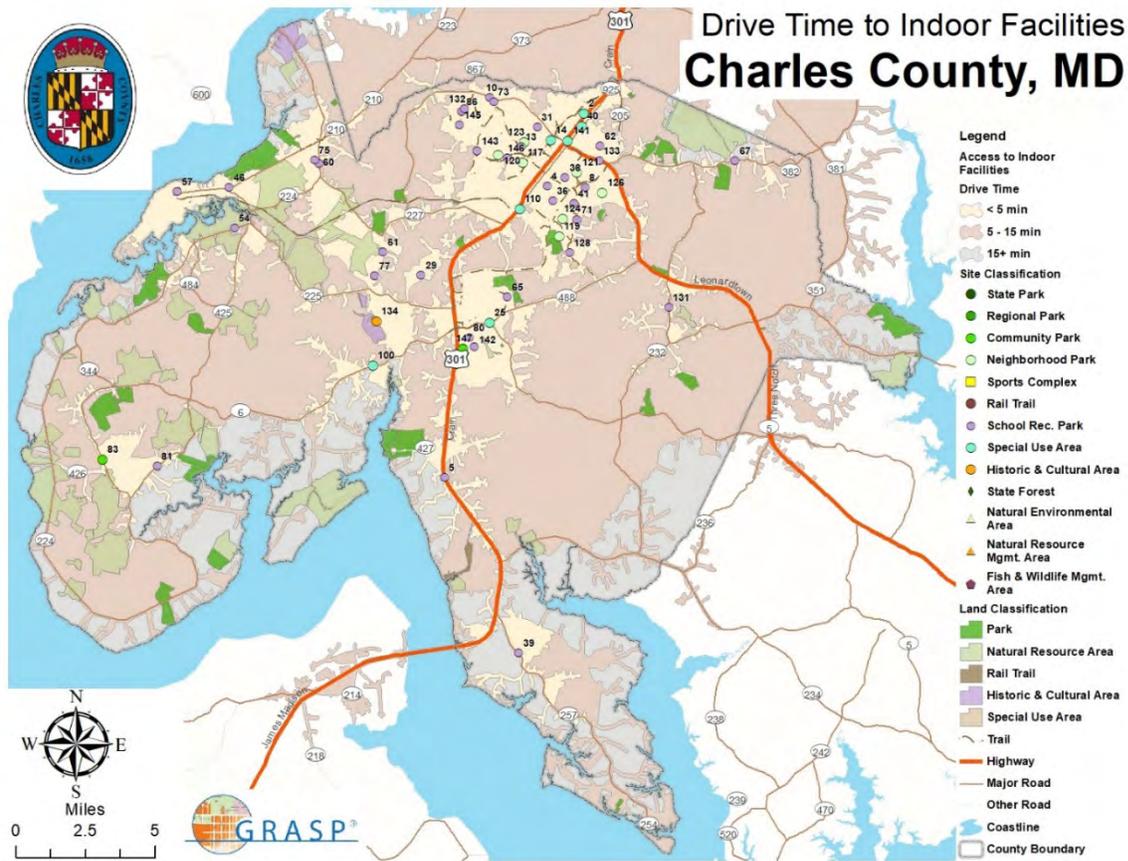


The following are identified as having historical or cultural significance or features:

- 37** Dr. Samuel A. Mudd House
- 72** Maryland Veterans Museum
- 93** Piscataway Park
- 129** Star Memorial Garden
- 134** Thomas Stone National Landmark
- 137** Train Station



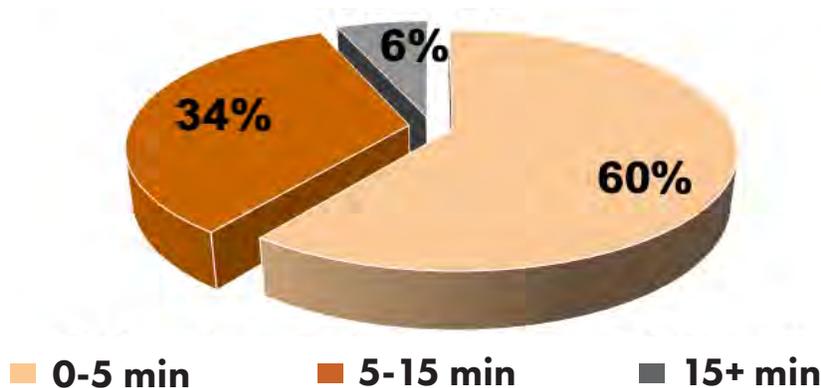
Map 16: Driving Time to Indoor Facilities



Source: Charles County Dept. of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and BerryDunn

Because many of the indoor facilities are school, and community center based as well as recreation centers they are conveniently located near population centers and the 5-min drive time. In more rural areas drive times may approach 15 min or more for residents. The estimated population percentages are presented in the following chart.

% of Population by Drive Time to Indoor Facilities





Indoor facilities can be found in the following locations:

2	AMF Bowling Center	77	Maurice McDonough HS and Pool
4	Arthur Middleton ES	80	Milton M. Somers Middle School and Somers Community Center
5	Bel Alton High School		
8	Benjamin Stoddert MS and Stoddert Community Center	81	Mt. Hope-Nanjemoy ES
10	Berry ES	83	Nanjemoy Community Center
13	C. Paul Barnhart ES	86	North Point High School & Community Pool
14	Capital Clubhouse	100	Port Tobacco Recreation Center
25	Clarks Senior Center	110	Sky Zone Trampoline Park
29	College of Southern Maryland	116	St. Charles - Bannister Neighborhood Center
31	Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer ES		
36	Dr. Gustavus Brown Elementary School	117	St. Charles - Dorchester Community Center
38	Dr. Samuel Mudd ES	119	St. Charles - Gleneagles Community Center
39	Dr. Thomas Higdon ES & Piccowaxen MS, and Piccowaxen Community Center	120	St. Charles - Hampshire Community Center
40	Elite Gymnastics & Recreation Center	121	St. Charles - Huntington Community Ctr.
41	Eva Turner ES	123	St. Charles - Lancaster Community Center
46	General Smallwood MS and Smallwood Community Center	124	St. Charles - Sheffield Community Center
54	Henry E. Lackey HS & Community Pool	126	St. Charles - Wakefield Community Ctr.
57	Indian Head ES	128	St. Charles HS & Community Pool
60	J.C. Parks ES	131	T.C. Martin ES
61	James Craik Elementary School	132	Theodore G. Davis MS & Community Center
62	John Hanson MS & Community Center & JP Ryon School	133	Thomas Stone HS and Pool
65	La Plata HS & Pool and Matula Elem. School	134	Thomas Stone National Landmark
67	Malcolm ES	141	Waldorf Senior Center
71	Mary Burgess Neal ES	142	Walter J. Mitchell ES
73	Mattawoman Middle School and Mattawoman Community Center	143	Westlake HS
75	Matthew Henson Middle School and Henson Community Center	145	William A. Diggs ES
		146	William B. Wade ES and Wade Community Center
		147	Wills Memorial Par



G. Level of Service Analysis Findings

Each portion of the level of service analysis utilized different means to gather data and ideas, and gauge how well the existing system of parks, recreation amenities, and open spaces in Charles County met the expectations and needs of existing users. As of January 2022, the collective analysis yielded the following findings regarding overall strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities that helped shape 2022 goals for parks and recreation, and are likely to have an impact on the County’s management of the parks system and provision of recreation services over the next five years:

1. The existing system of public parks, open spaces historical sites, and recreation infrastructure is a key community asset directly linked to the general high quality of life in Charles County.
 - A. Key benefits included:
 - i. Ecosystem services and environmental engagement
 - ii. Public health and wellness
 - iii. Preservation of coastal and rural landscape character
 - iv. Economic activity
 - v. Diverse, affordable, low-cost, and close to home public recreation options
2. Tremendous public outdoor recreation opportunities exist in the County, but enhancement of basic facilities and services to support participation in outdoor recreation activities were identified as clear needs. Existing local demand for trails, waterfront recreation opportunities, and other natural resource-based recreation activities appeared strong.
 - i. Trails – ongoing County efforts to expand and connect its system of on and off-road trails
 - ii. Waterfront recreation – long standing, active County effort to acquire waterfront property suitable for park development should continue to be a priority. Such sites are difficult to acquire and develop but could provide significant public benefit.
 - iii. Accessibility – updates to existing Parks and Recreation Facilities are needed to meet the accessibility standards.

3. Overall, levels of usage and satisfaction with existing County facilities and recreation programs was high. Existing demand appears to outweigh facility/program capacity for organized sports and water access sites. County and municipal parks, recreation facilities, and programs-focus service provisions on non-natural resource-based recreation services, such as the operation of sports complexes, playgrounds, and pools.
 - i. Many sports programs and leagues in the County utilize fields, gyms, and other facilities at County school sites for games and practices. These facilities are critical components of the public recreation system in Charles County. There is a need for an updated Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism and Charles County Public Schools which should be evaluated annually. There continues to be an increase in priority usage by schools which decreases public usage through the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism.
 - ii. Consideration should be given to begin capital investment for a recreation facility in the Waldorf area of the county and capitalize on opportunities to secure dwindling land in a rapidly developing and populated urban area.
 - iii. Neighborhood parks and community centers are included amenities and inventory within this 2022 Land Preservation, Parks and Recreation Plan, however it is noted that these facilities may not be accessible by everyone nor may the conditions of some of these aging amenities meet the expectations of the users.

With continued growth in the local population projected, existing strong rates of participation in recreation, and demand for certain existing facilities occasionally exceeding capacity, expansion of the parks and recreation facility inventory and operational capacity of the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism is needed to ensure the recreational needs and expectations of residents and visitors continue to be met or exceeded.





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Section 3: Natural Resource Land Conservation

The existing landscape of Charles County is defined by its natural lands including forests, rivers, abundant wetlands, and over 300 miles of shoreline. These areas support biodiversity and provide other ecosystem services needed by the public, such as wetlands filtering drinking water and forests cleansing the air. Areas preserved for the natural resource values within the County also provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and serve a major function in defining County character and quality of life of residents. The natural landscape of Charles County generally consists of:

- Nearly level upland plateaus
- Steeply sloped areas between uplands and low terraces
- Shoreline stream terraces
- Floodplains and tidal marsh

Charles County's Land Preservation Program was certified by the Maryland Department of Planning and the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation beginning July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2024. The following information provides an overview of the county's more recent agricultural land preservation efforts.

Connecting People with Nature

Parks, open spaces, and other preserved lands in Charles County are not only considered highly valuable for the critical natural resource value, and functions they protect, but also for the abundant and varied opportunities they provide for outdoor recreation and engagement with nature. This has been significant to the quality of life for residents for many years. The desirability of experiencing the natural beauty of the County's landscape is also sought out by visitors. In fact, the 2012 "Charles County Tourism Destination Plan Study" identified "natural resources," including State and County parks, as a primary magnet for visitors to the County.

Evaluation of the County's Agricultural Land Preservation Program

For over 20 years Charles County has promoted and implemented various land preservation programs. The County collaborates with the State and Federal government to leverage funding for easement purchases. Charles County has had its most successful program to date within the last several years. During the Fiscal Year 2020 Cycle for conservation easement acquisition, the County preserved 1,014 acres of farm and forest land. During FY 2021, the County preserved an additional 1,623 acres. This rate of land preserved is among the highest in the state with 63% of the total acreage over the last five years occurring within the PPA. Similar achievement is anticipated in FY 2022 and FY 2023 as voluntary interest from landowners grows. A map of the protected lands can be found in *Map 11*. A synopsis of program status and accomplishments is as follows:

Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF) Program

The MALPF Program was established by the Maryland General Assembly in 1977 as part of the Maryland Department of Agriculture. Charles County continues to be a strong advocate for and participant in land preservation program efforts. Charles County has submitted among the highest numbers of land preservation applications to the MD Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and contributed the maximum level of funding to their Matching Funds Program. By way of example, in the past 5 cycles, combined state and county funding in the amount of \$13.6 million has been spent in



Charles County through this Program alone to protect 3,976 acres of agricultural and forest land. Since inception, 11,023 acres in Charles County have been preserved through the MALPF program.

Rural Legacy Program

Since the designation of the first Rural Legacy Area in Charles County 4,650 acres have been protected. The Zekiah Watershed Rural Legacy Area, Charles County's first, was designated in 1998 and expanded in 2020 to encompass the Cobb Neck area PPA. In February 2021, an application was submitted for the State's consideration for the County's second RLA centered on the Nanjemoy peninsula in western Charles County – a key recommendation of the 2016 Charles County Comprehensive Plan. This new Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Forest Rural Legacy Area was approved on December 1, 2021, by the MD Board of Public Works. The two Rural Legacy Areas account for more than 43% of the land in Charles County.

Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)

MET is a quasi-governmental organization of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources that protects scenic open spaces including farm and forestland, wildlife habitat, waterfront, unique or rare areas and historic sites. Easement donations yield property and tax benefits. 5,616 acres of property have MET easements within Charles County, most of which is working agricultural and forest lands.

Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program

Establishing this program was a longstanding recommendation of the County's Comprehensive Plan, and the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan (LPPRP). On November 18, 2014, the County Commissioners amended Chapter 215 of the County Code to include a Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program. Over the budget years of 2014-17, a capital improvement budget was established at approximately \$1 million to initiate the Program. In May 2017, the County began issuing option contracts to purchase and retire transferrable development rights (TDRs) from applicants. For the most recent 2020 PDR cycle, the County purchased and retired 128 TDRs.

Transfer Development Rights (TDR) Program

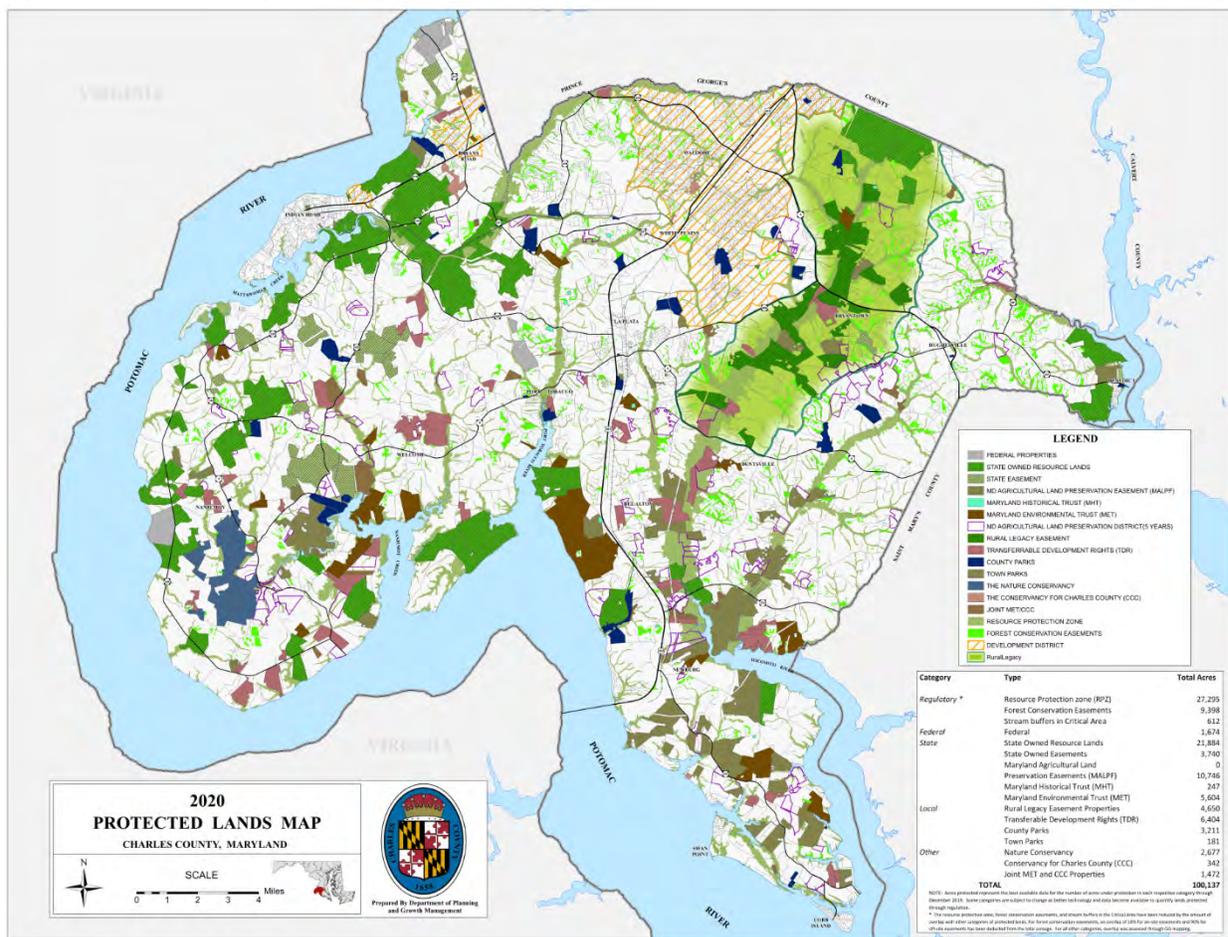
The County adopted a TDR program in 1992 as part of a comprehensive rezoning and today 6,404 acres have been protected through the program. Development rights are transferred from properties enrolled as a Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Districts to receiving areas in the Development District. The right of transfer is one development right per three acres. The County has not made any revisions to the TDR Program since the 2012 LPPRP. The 2016 Comprehensive Plan contains an action item to revise the TDR Program to incentivize their use and to continue designating productive agricultural and forest land as sending areas for TDRs. It also calls for the establishment a work group to examine ways to balance TDR supply and demand and make recommendations for changes to the program. With the improvement in the real estate market in the past few years, the private TDR market has improved, and the County's participation in the purchase and retirement of TDR supplements the Program.

A. Goals and Objectives for Natural Resource Land Conservation

The County has a 27,860-acre goal left to reach their protection goal for protecting half of its total land area. The updated acreage highlights the County’s continued commitment to conserving local natural resources, and environmentally significant landscapes. Appendix D includes an inventory of lands managed by the County and Maryland Department of Natural Resources, many of which are significant to preserving natural resources and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation. The map below illustrates land throughout Charles County that is protected by multiple parks, natural resources, and agricultural land preservation programs.

Map 17 illustrates land throughout Charles County protected by multiple parks, natural resources, and agricultural land preservation programs. A larger, more easily readable version of Map 12 is included in the appendix.

Map 17: Charles County Protected Lands 2020



Source: Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management

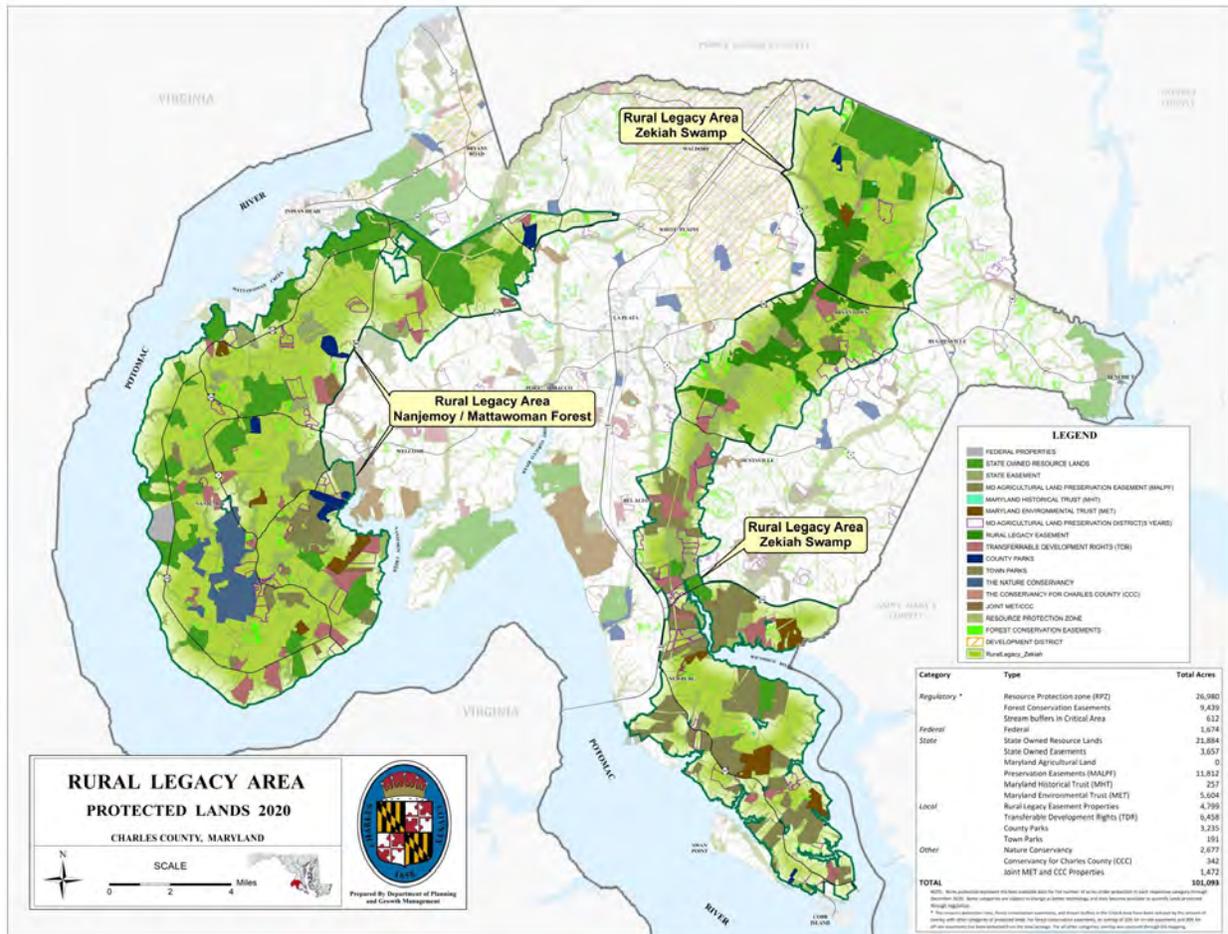
Over the past decade, Charles County has made several substantial accomplishment with respect to natural resource land conservation They include partnering with MD DNR to develop an Ecosystem Service Assessment for the County, creation of a new Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, adoption of a septic tier map that includes 191,194 acres or 65% of the County as Tier IV, limiting that area to minor subdivisions, adoption of a Priority Preservation Area that includes 45% of the County, and the adoption of a new Watershed Conservation District land use and zoning designation that re-zones 35,000 acres to one unit per 20 acres and sets impervious surface limits.

In addition to these accomplishments, Charles County has added significant portions of land to its Rural Legacy Areas. In October 2020, the County and State approved a major expansion to the Zekiah Rural Legacy Area, adding an additional 30,591 acres that essentially doubled its size. And in December 2021, a new Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Forest Rural Legacy Area designation was approved by the County and State. This new Rural Legacy Area contains 65,059 acres on the western side of the County. These designations across large swaths of the County ensure preservation of the County’s rural roots and prevent substantial development from occurring. *Map 18* identifies the boundaries of these two Rural Legacy Areas.

Established by the County’s 2016 Comprehensive Plan (*Chapter 5: Natural Resource Protection*) the current goals, and policies that serve as the backbone of Charles County natural resource protection and open space conservation strategy consist of the following.



Map 18: Charles County Rural Legacy Area- Protected Lands 2020



Source: Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management

Land Category		PPA
1	Total Area ¹	132,741
2	Developed + Committed (subdivided)	27,427
3	Not Developed (1-2)	105,314
4	Protection Goal (#3*0.80)	84,251
5	Already Protected	56,391
6	Remaining Acreage that needs to be Protected to Meet Protection Goal (4-5)	27,860
7	Pool of Lane Available for Protection (3-5)	48,923
8	Percent of Pool to be Protected (6/7)	57%

¹ PPA area reduction due to GIS data refinements as result of using tax parcel data for the base layer and the removal of the MD Airport Employment and Industrial Park District



B. Natural Resource Land Conservation Successes

The total land area in Charles County is 294,404 acres. The County has established the goal to protect 132,741 acres, as total area in its 2022 “Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan.” This goal remains valid, and as of April 2022. It should be noted that the PPA area experienced a reduction due to GIS data refinements as a result of using tax parcel data for the base layer and the removal of the MD Airport Employment and Industrial Park District. The County’s overall Protection Goal is 84,251 and has already protected 56,391 acres leaving 27,860 additional acres to be protected. The County maintains a continued commitment to conserving local natural resources, and environmentally significant landscapes. *Appendix D* includes an inventory of lands managed by the County and Maryland Department of Natural Resources, many of which are significant to preserving natural resources and providing opportunities for outdoor recreation.

Over the past decade, Charles County has made several substantial accomplishment with respect to natural resource land conservation They include partnering with MD DNR to develop an Ecosystem Service Assessment for the County, creation of a new Purchase of Development Rights (PDR) Program, adoption of a septic tier map that includes 191,194 acres or 65% of the County as Tier IV, limiting that area to minor subdivisions, adoption of a Priority Preservation Area that includes 45% of the County, and the adoption of a new Watershed Conservation District land use and zoning designation that re-zones 35,000 acres to one unit per 20 acres and sets impervious surface limits.

In addition to these accomplishments, Charles County has added significant portions of land to its Rural Legacy Areas. In October 2020, the County and State approved a major expansion to the Zekiah Rural Legacy Area, adding an additional 30,591 acres that essentially doubled its size. And in December 2021, a new Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Forest Rural Legacy Area designation was approved by the County and State. This new Rural Legacy Area contains 65,059 acres on the western side of the County. These designations across large swaths of the County ensure preservation of the County’s rural roots and prevent substantial development from occurring. *Map 18* identifies the boundaries of these two Rural Legacy Areas.

Established by the County’s 2016 Comprehensive Plan (*Chapter 5: Natural Resource Protection*) the current goals, and policies that serve as the backbone of Charles County natural resource protection and open space conservation strategy consist of the following.

Comprehensive Plan 2016 Charles County Natural Resource Conservation Goals and Objectives:

1. Maintain a safe and healthy environment by protecting air, water, and land resources, and preventing the degradation of those resources from pollutants.
2. Protect 50% of Charles County as open space.
3. Implement and enforce the County’s Critical Area Program, which is designed to foster more sensitive development along the shoreline to minimize damage to water quality and wildlife habitats.
4. Preserve and enforce the Resource Protection Zone as a buffer to ensure protection of sensitive inland and environmental features in stream valleys outside the Critical Area, such as the Mattawoman Creek, Zekiah Swamp Run, Gilbert Swamp Run, Port Tobacco River, Nanjemoy, Swanson, and Indian Creek watersheds.
5. Protect the habitats of rare, threatened, and endangered species to maintain their long-term survival and biodiversity.

6. Conserve large tracts of contiguous forestland and forest interior dwelling bird habitat (FIDS) determined to be of significance due to their value for wildlife habitat, water quality, and air quality.
7. Promote awareness of environmental issues through public outreach, public access, and educational programs to cultivate a basic understanding of the natural environment and its valuable resources.
8. Provide public access to open space, forestland, and the waterfront as an amenity to an enhanced quality of life.

In addition to the County’s goals, the State of Maryland has established goals for natural resource land conservation, as documented in *Appendix G*. The goals of the County and State share the same general purpose and intended outcomes – to protect and preserve the natural resources, lands, and beneficial functions and values they provide to the public.

C. Charles County Natural Resource Conservation Goals and Objectives (as noted in the Comprehensive Plan)

1. Maintain a safe and healthy environment by protecting air, water, and land resources, and preventing the degradation of those resources from pollutants.
2. Protect 50% of Charles County as open space.
3. Implement and enforce the County’s Critical Area Program, which is designed to foster more sensitive development along the shoreline to minimize damage to water quality and wildlife habitats.
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Focus Areas of Charles County Natural Resource Planning, Regulation, and Conservation Programs:

1. Air Quality
2. Geology, Soils, and Topography
3. Waterways, Floodplains, and Wetlands
4. Forests
5. Habitat and Wildlife
6. Shorelines
7. Watershed Management



D. County Natural Resource Conservation Focus Areas and Protection Programs

The primary resources utilized by Charles County to achieve its goals for natural resource conservation include land acquisition and easement programs, federal, state, and county land use and environmental regulatory programs and agencies, and regional and local planning. The Charles County 2016 Comprehensive Plan's Inventory of Natural Resources with Associated Programs outlines the County's planning and regulatory programs focused on protecting lands, natural resources, and environmental quality.

1. Air Quality

Charles County is a member of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, and as such, is certified to participate in preparing an air quality plan for the Washington D.C., Virginia, and Maryland area as required by the federal Clean Air Act. The Comprehensive Plan notes concern with existing ozone pollution known to persist in the Interstate 95 corridor that may impact the northern portion of the County.

2. Geology, Soils, and Topography

The entirety of Charles County is underlain by layers of sand, gravel, silt, and clay. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey" for the Charles County area, high water tables are prevalent, and soil layers are intermixed. In sloped areas, especially those near streams, wetlands, or other water bodies, County ordinances encourage the preservation of steep slopes (those greater than 15% grade) and require erosion and sediment control permitting for proposed development projects.

The County's Codes, Permits, and Inspections Division, as well as the Charles Soil Conservation District review, permit, and enforce erosion and sediment control plans, other development regulations, and significant activities involving land disturbance.

3. Waterways, Floodplains, and Wetlands

Charles County recognizes the tremendous functions served by its abundant rivers, streams, wetlands, and floodplains. These areas are the landscape's drainage system and serve to support biodiversity; cleanse water of sediment, nutrients, and debris; recharge ground water, moderate flooding; and mitigate the impacts of storm damage to the built environment.

Charles County landscape includes:

- 31,000 acres of Wetlands
- 164,600 acres of Forests
- 300+ miles of Shoreline

The County estimates there are about 31,000 acres of vegetated wetlands within its jurisdiction and seeks to protect these natural features and their functions through:

- **Resource Protection Zone (RPZ):** a zoning overlay area applying to streams within the County that are outside of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area in which most forms of land development are prohibited and allowed uses such as farming require management plans. The RPZ also establishes "buffer" zones around streams, wetlands, and other associated resources in which land development activity is regulated. As of December 2016, The Resource Protection Zone covers 26,980 acres that is not part of other protected lands. This land is being targeted to help meet the overall 50% protection goal.



- **Floodplain Management Program and Floodplain Ordinance:** defines floodplain districts within the County and establishes regulations, restrictions, and permitting program for land development within regulated areas to protect public health and property and minimize potential damage to the existing natural and built infrastructure within flood prone areas.
- **Wetland Protection:** is primarily managed through a joint permitting process, and enforcement programs of the Maryland Department of the Environment and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These agencies regulate alterations of any floodplain, inland or tidal wetland, or waterway.

4. Forests

From the time of colonization, through the late 1800s, most forested areas were cleared for agricultural uses. Since that time, large areas of the County have reverted to forest cover. As of 2016, the County estimated that approximately 164,600 acres, or 56% of the County’s total land, was forested, making it the dominant land use.

The County recognizes the natural resource values of its forests, especially those preserved in large patches, and actively works with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service to implement the recommendations of its 2009 “Strategic Forest Assessment” for Charles County. The County is proud to be the most forested county in eastern Maryland, and third most forested county in the State – behind western Maryland’s Garrett and Allegany Counties.

5. Habitat and Wildlife

The woodlands, wetlands, fields, and coastlines of Charles County are teeming with flora and fauna. Many of these natural areas are significant spawning and nesting sites for some of the 45 species of mammals, 32 species of reptiles, 25 species of amphibians, and 273 species of birds known to inhabit the County.

The State of Maryland’s Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet) and GreenPrint program identify areas in the County significant to the protection of species, natural communities, large contiguous tracts of ecologically significant areas and natural corridors that could serve to connect preserved areas, habitats, and system functions. Generally, the County’s goals and programs for habitat and species conservation mirror those of the State, which illustrates the recognition of the shared values and efforts needed to be successful in preservation efforts.

- **BioNet** – prioritizes areas of statewide importance for the conservation of species and natural communities into a 5-tiered system, with Tier I being the most significant for conservation. Charles County includes over 34,036 acres of Tier I and II areas, and 199,741 acres of Tiers, III, IV, and Tier V.
- **Maryland GreenPrint** – identifies areas of high ecological value in the State and encourages protection of lands within these Targeted Ecological Areas. GreenPrint areas in Charles County are generally consistent with the County’s identified priority areas for conservation as illustrated on the County’s 2016 Land Use and Protected Lands maps in *Appendix H*.



Among the most sensitive ecological areas in the County are four state-designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). These areas include features that set them apart as “best examples” of unique ecosystems within Maryland. In addition to their special character, each is known to be home to at least one locally threatened or endangered species. Land disturbing activities and development within NHAs is regulated, with requirements that activities will have no adverse impacts on the plant and animal communities.

Natural Heritage Areas in Charles County:

1. Allen’s Fresh: NHA-16
2. Chicamuxen Creek: NHA-17
3. Popes Creek: NHA-18

Land development and land disturbing activities have had, and will continue to have, the potential to negatively impact sensitive natural resource areas, including critical habitats. In areas of Charles County outside of NHAs, or the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, the County has promulgated subdivision regulations that include provisions to protect:

- Habitat of rare, threatened, and endangered species
- Fish spawning areas
- Submerged aquatic vegetation
- Forest interior dwelling bird habitat
- Colonial water bird nesting site

6. Chesapeake Bay Critical Area

Charles County contains 300 plus miles of shoreline along tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, per GIS data. To protect tidal waters and coastal areas, Maryland’s Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law was adopted in 1984. In June of 1989, Charles County’s Critical Area Program was adopted and established criteria limiting development density and land uses and added protections for natural shoreline areas.

The Critical Area overlay zone determines development density. There are three overlay zones: Resource Conservation Zone, Limited Development Zone, and Intense Development Zone. Growth Allocation is the process by which an overlay zone may be changed to allow for an increase in density. Charles County’s remaining Growth Allocation allowance, as of January 1, 2017, is 927.36 acres.

7. Coastal Resiliency and Ongoing Management Actions

The Charles County shoreline has experienced varying degrees of erosion over time. Areas of the County that experience some of the highest rates of shoreline erosion are on the Potomac shoreline from Sandy Point south to lower Thomas Point, Blossom Point to Windmill Point, the eastern shore of Port Tobacco River to Pope’s Creek, and the southwestern shore of Cobb Island. In some areas of the Potomac, bluffs are as high as 50 feet.

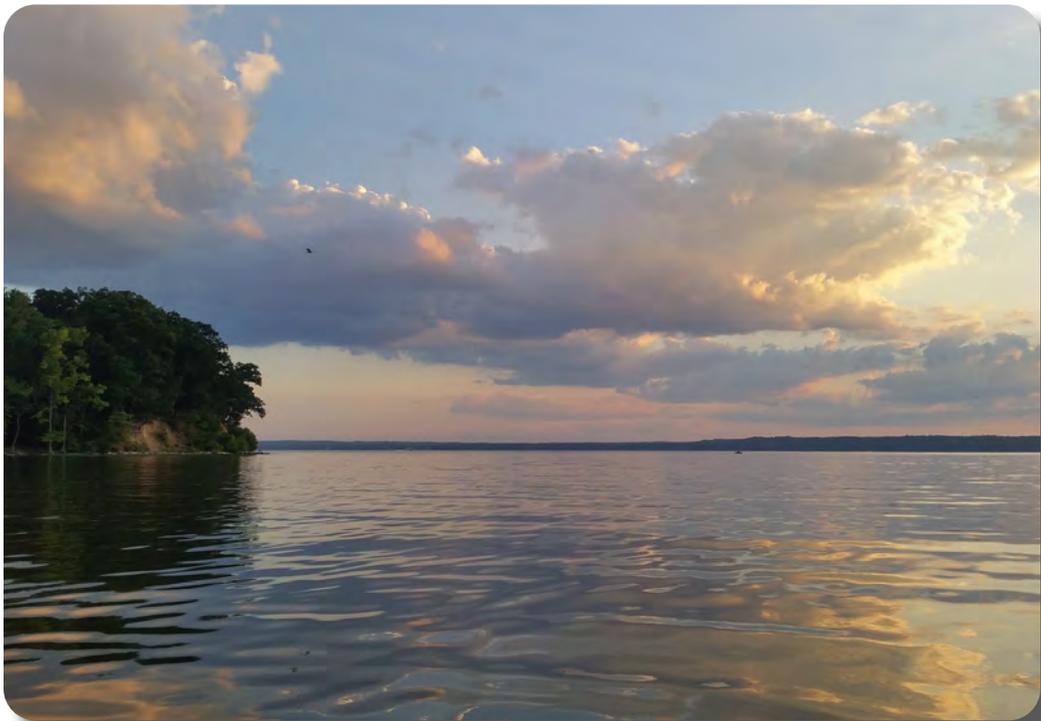
The Living Shoreline Protection Act of 2008 requires that improvements to protect a person’s property against shoreline erosion consist of marsh creation or other nonstructural shoreline stabilization measures that preserve the natural environment. To help meet requirements of the County’s Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Discharge Elimination Permit (NPDES), the County has initiated projects to restore shoreline on County owned properties. In addition, the County is exploring opportunities to develop a program to incentivize shoreline restoration projects on private lands.

8. Watershed Management

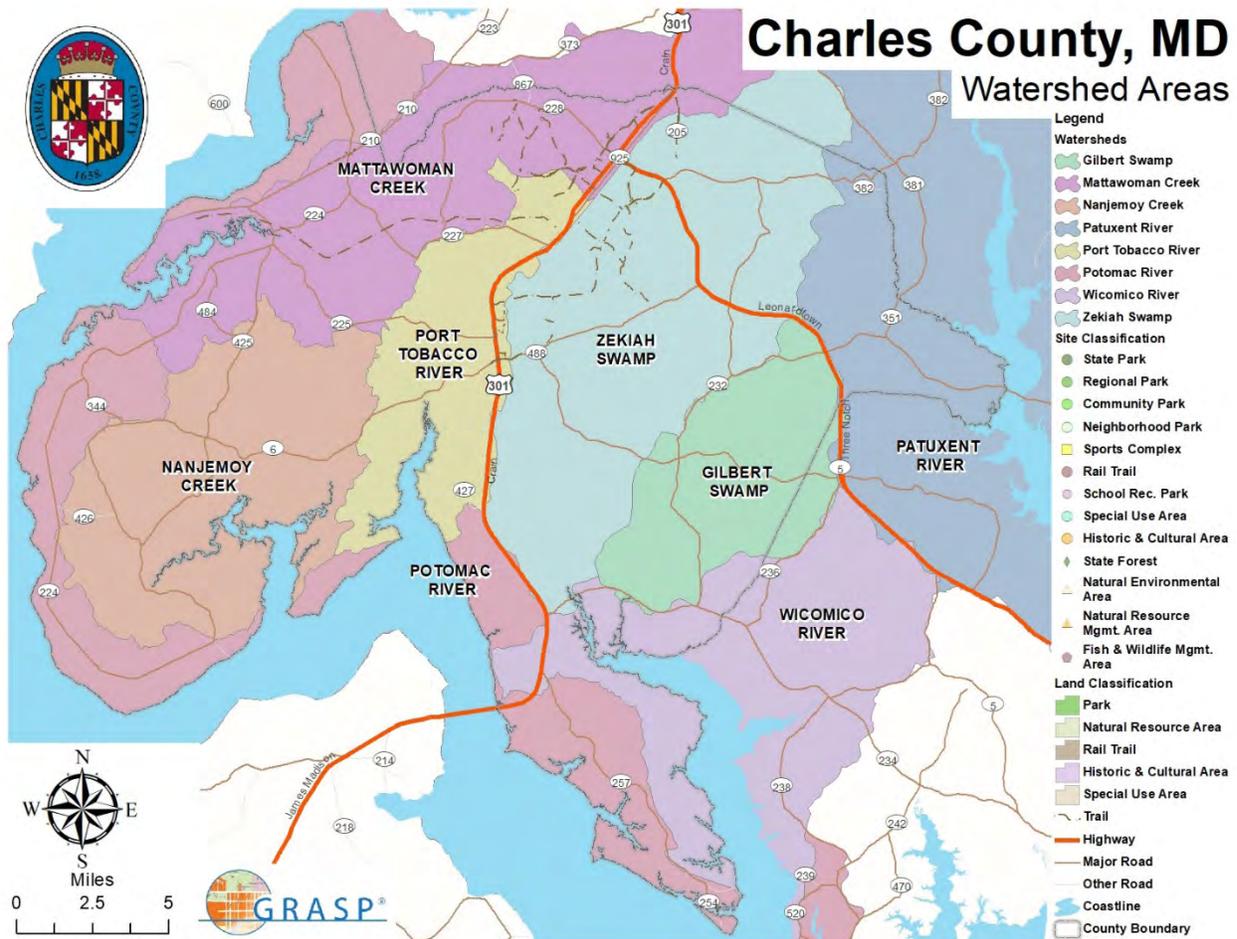
Identified by the 2016 Comprehensive Plan as, “key to maintaining to improving water quality and other natural resources,” watershed management and planning is considered an overarching County strategy for achieving desired goals for resource protection overall. Land preservation for the purposes of conserving undeveloped land in its natural state is viewed as one of most cost effective watershed, and natural resource protection tools available to the County. Focus areas identified by the Comprehensive Plan include the seven watersheds noted below and illustrated on *Map 19*.

Each area encompasses many thousands of acres and has been assessed as an area of particularly high natural resource value and high priority for conservation by various federal, state, County, and non-profit environmental organizations.

- Mattawoman Creek Watershed
- Zekiah Swamp Watershed
- Gilbert Swamp Watershed
- Port Tobacco River Watershed
- Nanjemoy Creek Watershed
- Patuxent River Watershed
- Wicomico River Watershed
- Potomac River Watershed



Map 19: Watershed Areas Map



Source: Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management and BerryDunn

Role of Land Conservation and Associated Significant Funding Sources

With the preservation of land determined to be a preferred means of protecting natural resources and open space, Charles County has sought to leverage funding from multiple sources to implement its policies and actions for natural resource conservation. These funds, often in the forms of grants, are combined with additional County funds to purchase easements, development rights, and fee simple acquisitions of properties determined to be significant to advancing the County’s goals for conserving areas rich in natural resource value for the overall public benefit. Major sources of funding for County natural resource land conservation programs include: Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, Maryland’s Rural Legacy Program, USFWS, and Maryland’s Program Open Space.

The U.S. Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, otherwise known as REPI, provides funding to help purchase conservation easements where the federal government has an interest in protecting areas near military bases from encroaching development. Charles County contains two REPI eligible focus areas, one in the Cobb Neck region and the other on the western side, bordering the Potomac River. These two areas are also within the County’s Priority Preservation Area as further described in Chapter IV of this Plan. As endorsed by the Charles County Land Preservation Advisory Board, this Plan recommends the designation of a new Rural Legacy Area



that is targeted within the County’s Priority Preservation Area and is REPI funding eligible. Focus and emphasis should be placed on an area that demonstrates landowner interest in land preservation programs and the presence of land that contain high value agricultural and natural resources.

Program Open Space – State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources

Maryland’s Program Open Space has been, and will continue to be, a relied upon resource that assists Charles County in acquiring lands significant to natural resource protection. The Stateside funding from the Program has been used in partnership projects between the Department of Natural Resources and County to purchase large properties for conservation purposes. Program Open Space Localside funding has also been leveraged to acquire park land and to assist in provision of basic amenities at parks and open space sites to provide public access to outdoor recreation opportunities and promote engagement with nature.

E. Policies and Actions

As specified by the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the following policies and actions have been recommended for guiding natural resource land conservation efforts in the County.

General Policies:

1. Place special emphasis on watershed management to balance the protection of the Mattawoman Creek’s natural resources and water quality within the County’s development plans. In addition to the Priority Preservation Area (PPA), the Mattawoman Creek watershed should be targeted for acquisition for conservation purposes.
2. Implement and enhance the County’s environmental preservation and conservation objectives through administrative mechanisms including subdivision regulations, sediment and erosion control, environmental review processes, development regulations, and zoning.
3. Continue to coordinate and implement the goals and objectives of adopted policy plans including the Patuxent River Policy Plan, the Wicomico Scenic River Study and Management Plan, the Zekiah Swamp Rural Legacy Area Plan, the Port Tobacco River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy, the Lower Potomac River Coordinated Management Plan (Nanjemoy Peninsula), and other watershed restoration and management plans including watershed implementation plans.
4. Guide development away from areas vulnerable to natural hazards – especially areas subject to flooding, storm surge, and shore erosion.
5. Require best management practices including low-impact development techniques to minimize the impacts of development on the natural environment.
6. Through public and private resources, purchase (or otherwise acquire) conservation easements to preserve environmentally sensitive resources. Develop parks, recreation, and open space plans in conjunction with stream valley protection objectives.
7. Work cooperatively with the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee to ensure the area complies with the requirements of the 1992 Clean Air Act.
8. Utilize the State of Maryland’s GreenPrint maps for Targeted Ecological Areas as a guide to focus conservation efforts in Charles County.



Land Resources Policies:

1. Restrict development within 100-year floodplains.
2. Conserve remaining wooded areas in the County. Pursue grant opportunities or other programs to increase, enhance, and protect forests, and require new native plantings to support other natural resource objectives including enhancing riparian buffers, reducing erosion and sedimentation, improving air quality, and mitigating the effects of stormwater runoff.
3. Retain as much of the forest and tree cover as practical within urban areas.
4. Require special engineering and construction standards when development occurs on erodible soils, steep slopes, or areas requiring special geotechnical consideration.
5. Promote wildlife education through the development of nature centers and park visitor centers to explain the importance of preserving natural habitat areas.
6. In order to implement U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stream valley protection measures, amend the zoning code to better protect the Resource Protection Zone in stream valley areas to the top of the slope.

Shorelines Policies:

1. Place a high degree of restriction on the use of waterfront land in the form of low residential densities, and high level of protection for forest land and agricultural land regulated under the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program.
2. Protect in stream and stream bank habitats of anadromous fish spawning waters. Promote land use policies in the watersheds of spawning streams that minimize adverse impacts to aquatic resources.
3. Protect shoreline habitats such as tidal wetlands, shellfish harvesting areas, colonial water bird nesting sites, and waterfowl staging and concentration areas through the habitat protection policies established in the County's Critical Area Program.
4. Manage development in the shoreline area to minimize problems of shoreline erosion.

Actions:

1. Mattawoman Stream Valley: Change the zoning and development regulations regarding standards to increase protection of the Mattawoman Stream Valley.
2. Stream Valley Protection: Use State grant funds and County funds as available to target stream valley protection through land acquisition or conservation easements.
3. In order to further protect stream valley areas in the County, review and revise as needed:
 - a. Low impact design standards in the Stormwater Management Ordinance.
 - b. Impervious coverage standards in the Zoning Ordinance.
 - c. Regulations to ensure protection of Tier II streams and other designated sensitive natural resource areas, including expanding riparian buffer requirements.
4. Urban Forests: Evaluate the existing urban forest and consider adopting an urban forest canopy coverage goal.
5. Limit Forest Fragmentation: Adopt regulations that protect forest hubs (greater than 100 acres) and forest corridors for the survival of the remaining biodiversity and Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) of Charles County. Under the Forest Conservation Ordinance, add a requirement

that priority forests be maintained on development sites, unless a variance is granted by the Board of Appeals.

6. Shoreline: Adopt buffers and development setbacks from areas vulnerable to over three feet of sea level rise in the next 100 years to protect private and public investments and accommodate inland wetland migration.
7. Transfer of Development Rights: Enhance the effectiveness of the Transfer of Development Rights program.
8. Habitat Protection: Adopt Biodiversity Conservation Network Tier I and II categories as habitat protection areas, and increase protection in these areas.
9. Conduct a comprehensive review of the Resource Protection Zone (RPZ) regulations to enhance protections of stream valleys, especially those with assigned Total Maximum Daily Loads.
10. Apply to the State of Maryland to establish a new Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Rural Legacy Area designation.

F. County Natural Resource Conservation Focus Areas and Protection Programs

The primary resources utilized by Charles County to achieve its goals for natural resource conservation include land acquisition and easement programs, federal, state, and county land use and environmental regulatory programs and agencies, and regional and local planning. The Charles County 2016 Comprehensive Plan's Inventory of Natural Resources with Associated Programs outlines the County's planning and regulatory programs focused on protecting lands, natural resources, and environmental quality.

Air Quality

Charles County is a member of the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee, and as such, is certified to participate in preparing an air quality plan for the Washington D.C., Virginia, and Maryland area as required by the federal Clean Air Act. The Comprehensive Plan notes concern with existing ozone pollution known to persist in the Interstate 95 corridor that may impact the northern portion of the County.

Geology, Soils, and Topography

The entirety of Charles County is underlain by layers of sand, gravel, silt, and clay. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, "Natural Resource Conservation Service Soil Survey" for the Charles County area, high water tables are prevalent, and soil layers are intermixed. In sloped areas, especially those near streams, wetlands, or other water bodies, County ordinances encourage the preservation of steep slopes (those greater than 15% grade), and require erosion and sediment control permitting for proposed development projects.

Focus Areas of Charles County Natural Resource Planning, Regulation, and Conservation Programs:

- Air Quality
- Geology, Soils, and Topography
- Waterways, Floodplains, and Wetlands
- Forests
- Habitat and Wildlife
- Shorelines
- Watershed Management



The County's Codes, Permits, and Inspections Division, as well as the Charles Soil Conservation District review, permit, and enforce erosion and sediment control plans, other development regulations, and significant activities involving land disturbance.

Waterways, Floodplains, and Wetlands

Charles County recognizes the tremendous functions served by its abundant rivers, streams, wetlands, and floodplains. These areas are the landscape's drainage system and serve to support biodiversity; cleanse water of sediment, nutrients, and debris; recharge ground water, moderate flooding; and mitigate the impacts of storm damage to the built environment.

The County estimates there are about 31,000 acres of vegetated wetlands within its jurisdiction and seeks to protect these natural features and their functions through:

- **Resource Protection Zone (RPZ):** a zoning overlay area applying to streams within the County that are outside of the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area in which most forms of land development are prohibited and allowed uses such as farming require management plans. The RPZ also establishes "buffer" zones around streams, wetlands, and other associated resources in which land development activity is regulated. As of December 2016, The Resource Protection Zone covers 26,980 acres that is not part of other protected lands. This land is being targeted to help meet the overall 50% protection goal.
- **Floodplain Management Program and Floodplain Ordinance:** defines floodplain districts within the County and establishes regulations, restrictions, and permitting program for land development within regulated areas to protect public health and property, and minimize potential damage to the existing natural and built infrastructure within flood prone areas.
- **Wetland Protection:** is primarily managed through a joint permitting process, and enforcement programs of the Maryland Department of the Environment and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. These agencies regulate alterations of any floodplain, inland or tidal wetland, or waterway.

Forests

From the time of colonization, through the late 1800s, the majority of forested areas were cleared for agricultural uses. Since that time, large areas of the County have reverted back to forest cover. As of 2016, the County estimated that approximately 164,600 acres, or 56% of the County's total land, was forested, making it the dominant land use.

The County recognizes the natural resource values of its forests, especially those preserved in large patches, and actively works with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service to implement the recommendations of its 2009 "Strategic Forest Assessment" for Charles County. The County is proud to be the most forested county in eastern Maryland, and third most forested county in the State – behind western Maryland's Garrett and Allegany Counties.



Habitat and Wildlife

The woodlands, wetlands, fields, and coastlines of Charles County are teeming with flora and fauna. Many of these natural areas are significant spawning and nesting sites for some of the 45 species of mammals, 32 species of reptiles, 25 species of amphibians, and 273 species of birds known to inhabit the County.

The State of Maryland’s Biodiversity Conservation Network (BioNet) and GreenPrint program identify areas in the County significant to the protection of species, natural communities, large contiguous tracts of ecologically significant areas and natural corridors that could serve to connect preserved areas, habitats, and system functions. Generally, the County’s goals and programs for habitat and species conservation mirror those of the State, which illustrates the recognition of the shared values and efforts needed to be successful in preservation efforts.

BioNet – prioritizes areas of statewide importance for the conservation of species and natural communities into a 5-tiered system, with Tier I being the most significant for conservation. Charles County includes over 34,036 acres of Tier I and II areas, and 199,741 acres of Tiers, III, IV, and Tier V.

Maryland GreenPrint – identifies areas of high ecological value in the State and encourages protection of lands within these Targeted Ecological Areas. GreenPrint areas in Charles County are generally consistent with the County’s identified priority areas for conservation as illustrated on the County’s 2016 Land Use and Protected Lands maps in *Appendix E*.

Among the most sensitive ecological areas in the County are four state-designated Natural Heritage Areas (NHAs). These areas include features that set them apart as “best examples” of unique ecosystems within Maryland. In addition to their special character, each is known to be home to at least one locally threatened or endangered species. Land disturbing activities and development within NHAs is regulated, with requirements that activities will have no adverse impacts on the plant and animal communities.

Natural Heritage Areas in Charles County:

- **Allen’s Fresh: NHA-16**
- **Chicamuxen Creek: NHA-17**
- **Popes Creek: NHA-18**
- **Upper Nanjemoy Creek: NHA-19**

Land development and land disturbing activities have had, and will continue to have, the potential to negatively impact sensitive natural resource areas, including critical habitats. In areas of Charles County outside of NHAs, or the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area, the County has promulgated subdivision regulations that include provisions to protect:

- Habitat of rare, threatened, and endangered species
- Fish spawning areas
- Submerged aquatic vegetation
- Forest interior dwelling bird habitat
- Colonial water bird nesting site



Chesapeake Bay Critical Area

Charles County contains 300 plus miles of shoreline along tributaries of the Chesapeake Bay, per GIS data. To protect tidal waters and coastal areas, Maryland's Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Law was adopted in 1984. In June of 1989, Charles County's Critical Area Program was adopted and established criteria limiting development density and land uses and added protections for natural shoreline areas.

The Critical Area overlay zone determines development density. There are three overlay zones: Resource Conservation Zone, Limited Development Zone, and Intense Development Zone. Growth Allocation is the process by which an overlay zone may be changed to allow for an increase in density. Charles County's remaining Growth Allocation allowance, as of January 1, 2017, is 927.36 acres.

Coastal Resiliency and Ongoing Management Actions

The Charles County shoreline has experienced varying degrees of erosion over time. Areas of the County that experience some of the highest rates of shoreline erosion are on the Potomac shoreline from Sandy Point south to lower Thomas Point, Blossom Point to Windmill Point, the eastern shore of Port Tobacco River to Pope's Creek, and the southwestern shore of Cobb Island. In some areas of the Potomac, bluffs are as high as 50 feet.

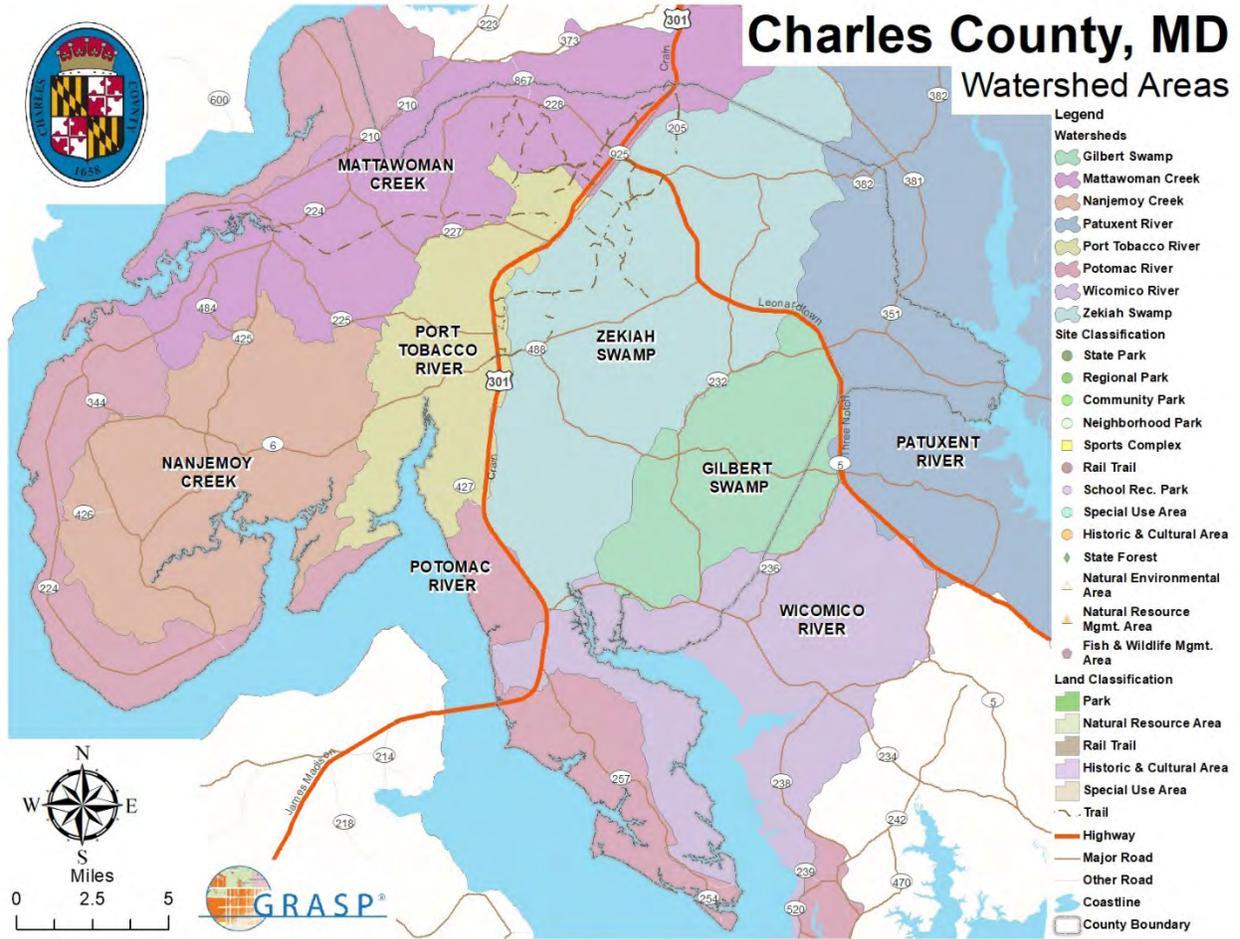
The Living Shoreline Protection Act of 2008 requires that improvements to protect a person's property against shoreline erosion consist of marsh creation or other nonstructural shoreline stabilization measures that preserve the natural environment. To help meet requirements of the County's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Discharge Elimination Permit (NPDES), the County has initiated projects to restore shoreline on County owned properties. In addition, the County is exploring opportunities to develop a program to incentivize shoreline restoration projects on private lands.

Watershed Management

Identified by the 2016 Comprehensive Plan as, "key to maintaining to improving water quality and other natural resources," watershed management and planning is considered an overarching County strategy for achieving desired goals for resource protection overall. Land preservation for the purposes of conserving undeveloped land in its natural state is viewed as one of most cost-effective watershed, and natural resource protection tools available to the County. Focus areas identified by the Comprehensive Plan include the seven watersheds noted below and illustrated on *Map 20*. Each area encompasses many thousands of acres and has been assessed as an area of particularly high natural resource value and high priority for conservation by various federal, state, County, and non-profit environmental organizations.

- Mattawoman Creek Watershed
- Zekiah Swamp Watershed
- Gilbert Swamp Watershed
- Port Tobacco River Watershed
- Nanjemoy Creek Watershed
- Patuxent River Watershed
- Wicomico River Watershed
- Potomac River Watershed

Map 20: Watershed Areas Map



Source: Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management and BerryDunn



Role of Land Conservation and Associated Significant Funding Sources

With the preservation of land determined to be a preferred means of protecting natural resources and open space, Charles County has sought to leverage funding from multiple sources to implement its policies and actions for natural resource conservation. These funds, often in the forms of grants, are combined with additional County funds to purchase easements, development rights, and fee simple acquisitions of properties determined to be significant to advancing the County's goals for conserving areas rich in natural resource value for the overall public benefit. Major sources of funding for County natural resource land conservation programs include: Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, Maryland's Rural Legacy Program, USFWS, and Maryland's Program Open Space.

The U.S. Department of Defense Readiness and Environmental Protection Integration Program, otherwise known as REPI, provides funding to help purchase conservation easements where the federal government has an interest in protecting areas near military bases from encroaching development. Charles County contains two REPI eligible focus areas, one in the Cobb Neck region and the other on the western side, bordering the Potomac River. These two areas are also within the County's Priority Preservation Area as further described in Chapter IV of this Plan. As endorsed by the Charles County Land Preservation Advisory Board, this Plan recommends the designation of a new Rural Legacy Area that is targeted within the County's Priority Preservation Area and is REPI funding eligible. Focus and emphasis should be placed on an area that demonstrates landowner interest in land preservation programs and the presence of land that contain high value agricultural and natural resources.

Program Open Space – State of Maryland, Department of Natural Resources

Maryland's Program Open Space has been, and will continue to be, a relied upon resource that assists Charles County in acquiring lands significant to natural resource protection. The Stateside funding from the Program has been used in partnership projects between the Department of Natural Resources and County to purchase large properties for conservation purposes. Program Open Space Localside funding has also been leveraged to acquire park land and to assist in provision of basic amenities at parks and open space sites to provide public access to outdoor recreation opportunities and promote engagement with nature.

Section 4: Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries

Charles County's current goals and priorities for agricultural land conservation, forestry, and fisheries are established in *Chapter 11* of the 2016 "Comprehensive Plan." Programs targeting the preservation of farmland and forested areas are managed by the County through the Department of Planning and Growth Management. The County has historically relied on both state and local programs to support the acquisition of land and easements to preserve farmland and woodlands of key preservation value.

A. Agriculture

The 2017 Census of Agriculture noted 41,201 acres of land designated for farm use in Charles County. As noted in the "Comprehensive Plan," the County believes the total amount of farmland in the county is likely closer to 212,000 acres, which is reflective of land that has the potential to be used for agricultural purposes.

The total market value of agricultural products from Charles County was estimated to be slightly more than \$14 million in the current "Comprehensive Plan." The majority of farm income derived from crops, and the remainder from livestock operations. The County's agricultural industry was generally characterized by relatively small farms, with roughly 60% of farms being smaller than 50 acres. The current agricultural industry of Charles County is significantly different than it had historically been from the time of colonization through about the 1960s. During that time, tobacco production was a major industry and was a significant employer of residents. Since then, social and economic changes essentially made tobacco farming unsustainable, and state assistance programs help local farmers diversify former tobacco farm operations. Although not as large of an economic engine as it previously was, farming in Charles County is still an important part of local cultural identity and heritage, including the local Amish community.



Local Farm

Image Credit: The Southern Maryland Chronicle

"Agriculture is likely to continue to be driven by a small number of large farms that produce grain, and a growing number of small farms that produce nursery, greenhouse, and vegetable crops, and provide agro-tourism opportunities."

2016 Comprehensive Plan



Priority Preservation Areas

- Contain productive agricultural or forest soils.
- Are governed by local codes and policies that limit development of agricultural and forest areas, and support the ability of working farms.
- Are large enough in acreage to support agricultural and forestry activities.
- Target preservation of at least 80% of the remaining undeveloped land in the area.

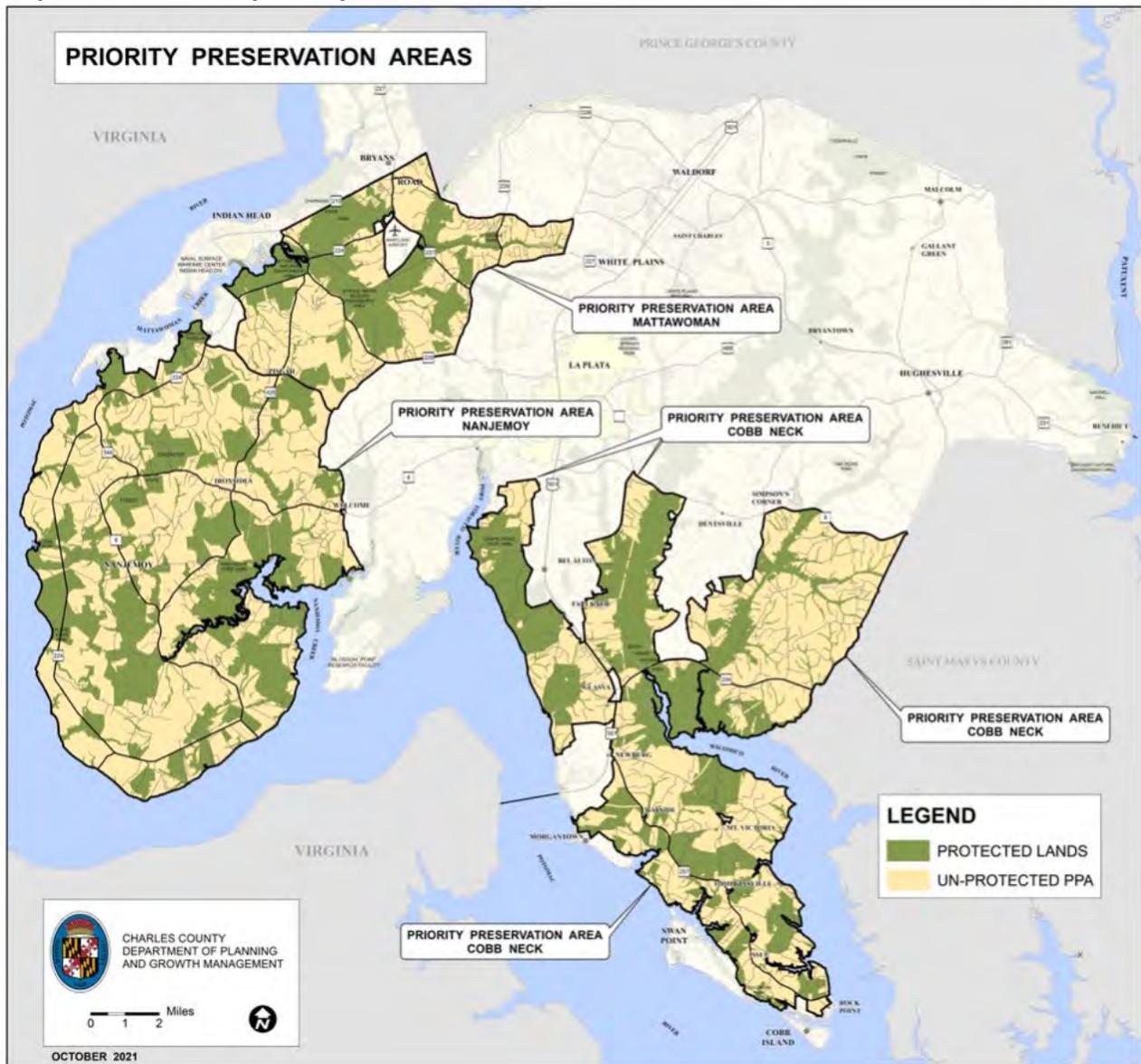
Priority Preservation Areas

Adoption of priority preservation areas in the Comprehensive Plan reflected local desire to maintain and support active agricultural activities in the County. Priority preservation areas include the most productive farm and forest land base in the County based on soils data and local knowledge.

Three priority preservation areas totaling 132,741 acres have been established in Charles County. These areas, illustrated in Map 21 consist of:

- **Cobb Neck** – predominantly row crop farming and forest land. This area is also home to a sizable Amish community, whose culture is tied to agriculture.
- **Mattawoman Creek** – forested wetlands, floodplains, and agricultural land.
- **Nanjemoy Peninsula** – large forested tracts.

Map 21: Charles County Priority Preservation Areas 2022



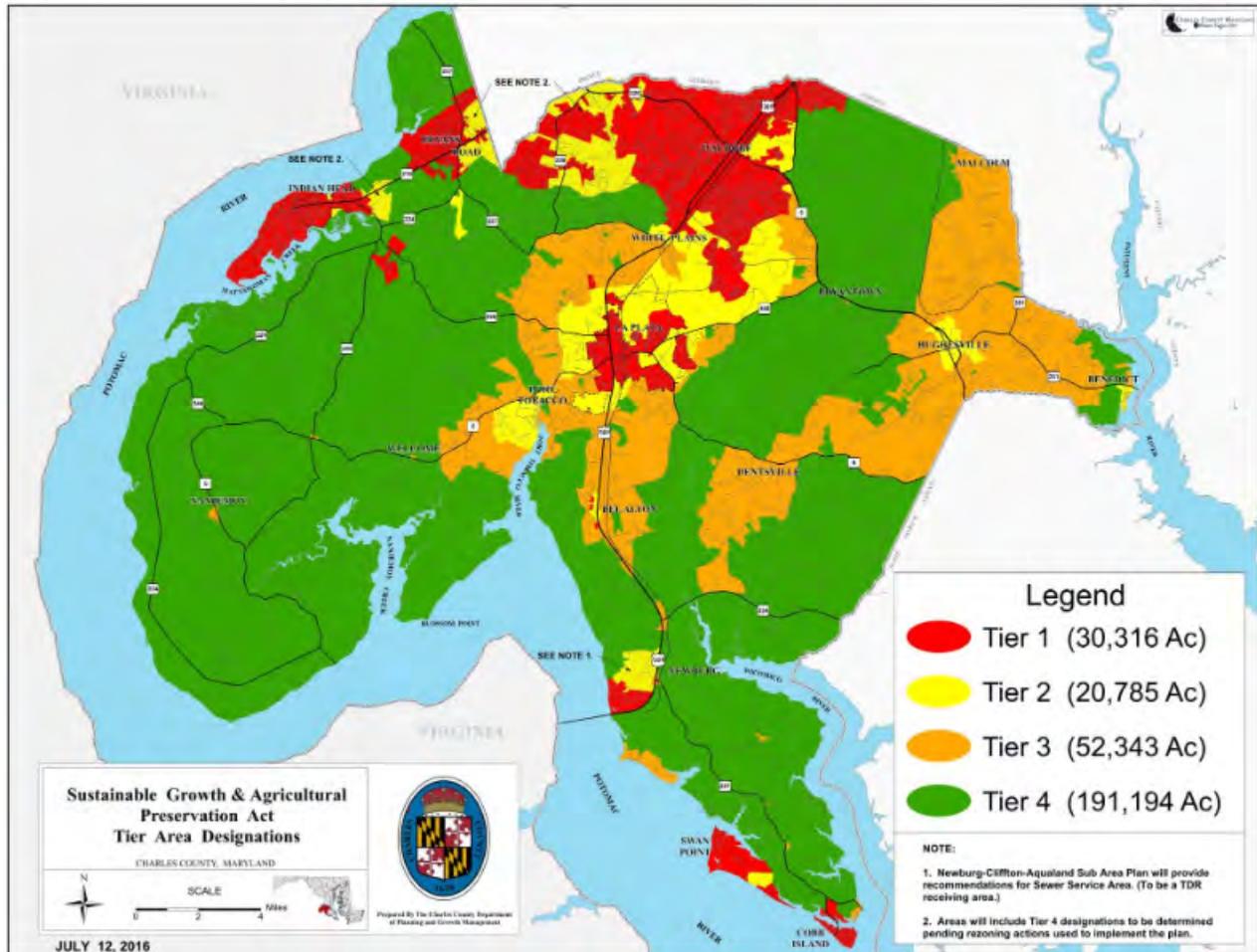
Source: 2016 Charles County Comprehensive Plan, 2021 PPA Update

Acres within the priority preservation areas totaled 132,741 acres. Of this land area, 27,427 acres were developed or approved for development, and 105,314 acres were not developed as of 2021. To meet the goal of protecting 80% of the existing undeveloped land in priority preservation areas (105,314 acres) the County must protect a total of 84,251 acres. Less than half of the undeveloped land in the Priority Preservation Area; 56,391 acres has already been protected by easement or public ownership, leaving 48,923 acres of undeveloped land potentially available for protection. Of the remaining unprotected, undeveloped land available for potential conservation, the County must protect 27,860 of those acres (or 57% of the remaining undeveloped land) to meet its goal for land protection in the Priority Preservation Area.

An additional 46,631 acres must be preserved for Charles County to meet its goal for land protection in priority preservation areas.

With an annual average preservation rate of 800 acres per year, the County would need 35 years to reach the preservation goal. The County believes this timeline is acceptable given that the PPA lies within *Septic Map 22 Tier IV*, and 35,000 acres has been re-zoned to one unit per 20 acres, thereby stabilizing the land base and providing the necessary time for land preservation programs to work.

Map 22: Charles County Septic Tier Map



Source: Charles County Agricultural & Land Preservation GIS

Since the completion of the last “Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan” in 2017, Charles County adopted the WCD Zone in 2017 and designated priority preservation areas as Tier IV. This change allowed the County to limit the development of subdivisions dependent on on-site septic systems within priority preservation areas. The County has also taken steps to limit development density within the Watershed Conservation District, which contains the Mattawoman priority preservation area. Since 2017, a new Purchase of Development Rights program, which targets conservation easement funding opportunities within priority preservation areas, was adopted by the County. As reported in the 2016 “Comprehensive Plan,” voluntary interest in agriculture and forest land conservation programs has been high. Through the preservation programs of the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation, local transfer of development rights, and local purchase of development rights, the County estimates that an average of 800 acres of farm and forest land is currently being protected in priority preservation areas annually.



To achieve its land preservation goals within priority preservation areas, Charles County has adopted the following three policies:

- 1. Protect 80% of the remaining undeveloped land within the priority preservation area.**
- 2. Prioritize land acquisitions through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation and County purchase of development rights programs in the priority preservation areas.**
- 3. Fund (fully) County agricultural land preservation programs in order to best leverage opportunities for matching funds, and consistently acquire land within priority preservation areas.**

B. Forestry and Timberland

In 2016, forested land was the dominant land use in Charles County. In fact, the County is the third most forested by acres in Maryland. Roughly 56% of the land area was forested, with much of the existing wooded acreage found on private properties and farms, where timber harvesting is an important business. In a 2008 U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service assessment, Charles County was ranked second in the state for industrial hardwood production and sixth overall for hard and soft wood production. Programs such as the Sustainable Forest Initiative and Forest Stewardship Council programs that certify timber products as sustainably harvested has caught on with local landowners. Certified wood tends to earn them a higher price for products, and as of 2017, roughly 3,000 acres of forest land in the Charles County had been certified as sustainable.

The ecosystem services provided by forest lands are in some ways immeasurable, and Charles County has documented such in its Comprehensive Plan. However, the Comprehensive Plan also suggests that individual landowners of forested properties may be able to benefit financially in new ways as society sets monetary value on some of these ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration that promote retention of land in a forested or natural state. Charles County is currently working with the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to develop an assessment of the County's ecosystem services.

C. Fisheries

The coastal and inland waterways of Charles County are known to support a high degree of biodiversity, as well as some of the most productive spawning areas and habitat areas of important commercial and game fish in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. Major rivers in the County including the Potomac, Patuxent, and Wicomico; their tributaries; and associated tidal areas are historically known to be productive fisheries and shellfish grounds that support recreational and commercial fishing. These areas have supported generations of local fishing operations that have harvested crab, oysters, and striped bass, among other species. According to the 2016 "Comprehensive Plan," many local farmers and rural landowners depend on fishing, crabbing, and harvesting oysters to supplement their incomes.

Fishing and crabbing for recreation are also popular activities in Charles County. There has been, and continues to be, high demand for public recreational opportunities in waterfront areas, and a desire in the County to improve and expand the inventory of public boat ramps, and other shoreline facilities. Recreational fishing conditions and popularity of the sport in southern Maryland attract anglers from across the country for different tournaments annually. Many of these events are often hosted at Smallwood State Park.



D. Policies and Actions

As specified by the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, the following policies and actions have been recommended for guiding natural resource land conservation efforts in the County.

General Policies:

- Place special emphasis on watershed management to balance the protection of the Mattawoman Creek’s natural resources and water quality within the County’s development plans. In addition to the Priority Preservation Area (PPA), the Mattawoman Creek watershed should be targeted for acquisition for conservation purposes.
- Implement and enhance the County’s environmental preservation and conservation objectives through administrative mechanisms including subdivision regulations, sediment and erosion control, environmental review processes, development regulations, and zoning.
- Continue to coordinate and implement the goals and objectives of adopted policy plans including the Patuxent River Policy Plan, the Wicomico Scenic River Study and Management Plan, the Zekiah Swamp Rural Legacy Area Plan, the Port Tobacco River Watershed Restoration Action Strategy, the Lower Potomac River Coordinated Management Plan (Nanjemoy Peninsula), and other watershed restoration and management plans including watershed implementation plans.
- Guide development away from areas vulnerable to natural hazards – especially areas subject to flooding, storm surge, and shore erosion.
- Require best management practices including low-impact development techniques to minimize the impacts of development on the natural environment.
- Through public and private resources, purchase (or otherwise acquire) conservation easements to preserve environmentally sensitive resources. Develop parks, recreation, and open space plans in conjunction with stream valley protection objectives.
- Work cooperatively with the Metropolitan Washington Air Quality Committee to ensure the area complies with the requirements of the 1992 Clean Air Act.
- Utilize the State of Maryland’s GreenPrint maps for Targeted Ecological Areas as a guide to focus conservation efforts in Charles County.

Land Resources Policies:

- Restrict development within 100-year floodplains.
- Conserve remaining wooded areas in the County. Pursue grant opportunities or other programs to increase, enhance, and protect forests, and require new native plantings to support other natural resource objectives including enhancing riparian buffers, reducing erosion and sedimentation, improving air quality, and mitigating the effects of stormwater runoff.
- Retain as much of the forest and tree cover as practical within urban areas.
- Require special engineering and construction standards when development occurs on erodible soils, steep slopes, or areas requiring special geotechnical consideration.
- Promote wildlife education through the development of nature centers and park visitor centers to explain the importance of preserving natural habitat areas.
- In order to implement U.S. Army Corps of Engineers stream valley protection measures, amend the zoning code to better protect the Resource Protection Zone in stream valley areas to the top of the slope.



Shorelines Policies:

- Place a high degree of restriction on the use of waterfront land in the form of low residential densities, and high level of protection for forest land and agricultural land regulated under the Chesapeake Bay Critical Area Program.
- Protect in stream and stream bank habitats of anadromous fish spawning waters. Promote land use policies in the watersheds of spawning streams that minimize adverse impacts to aquatic resources.
- Protect shoreline habitats such as tidal wetlands, shellfish harvesting areas, colonial water bird nesting sites, and waterfowl staging and concentration areas through the habitat protection policies established in the County's Critical Area Program.
- Manage development in the shoreline area to minimize problems of shoreline erosion.

Actions:

- Mattawoman Stream Valley: Change the zoning and development regulations regarding standards to increase protection of the Mattawoman Stream Valley.
- Stream Valley Protection: Use State grant funds and County funds as available to target stream valley protection through land acquisition or conservation easements.
- In order to further protect stream valley areas in the County, review and revise as needed:
- Low impact design standards in the Stormwater Management Ordinance.
- Impervious coverage standards in the Zoning Ordinance.
- Regulations to ensure protection of Tier II streams and other designated sensitive natural resource areas, including expanding riparian buffer requirements.
- Urban Forests: Evaluate the existing urban forest and consider adopting an urban forest canopy coverage goal.
- Limit Forest Fragmentation: Adopt regulations that protect forest hubs (greater than 100 acres) and forest corridors for the survival of the remaining biodiversity and Forest Interior Dwelling Species (FIDS) of Charles County. Under the Forest Conservation Ordinance, add a requirement that priority forests be maintained on development sites, unless a variance is granted by the Board of Appeals.
- Shoreline: Adopt buffers and development setbacks from areas vulnerable to over three feet of sea level rise in the next 100 years to protect private and public investments and accommodate inland wetland migration.
- Transfer of Development Rights: Enhance the effectiveness of the Transfer of Development Rights program.
- Habitat Protection: Adopt Biodiversity Conservation Network Tier I and II categories as habitat protection areas, and increase protection in these areas.
- Conduct a comprehensive review of the Resource Protection Zone (RPZ) regulations to enhance protections of stream valleys, especially those with assigned Total Maximum Daily Loads.
- Apply to the State of Maryland to establish a new Nanjemoy-Mattawoman Rural Legacy Area designation.



E. Agricultural Land Preservation, Forestry, and Fisheries- Comprehensive Plan

As established in the 2016 “Comprehensive Plan,” *Chapter 11*, the policies and actions guiding Charles County’s preservation of agricultural lands, public and private forest resources, and natural resources critical to fisheries conservation include:

Policies

1. Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries are core targeted industries essential for job creation and the future quality of life of County residents. Minimize conflicts with other uses, especially residential.
2. Maintain the farmers’ rights to farm.
3. Support marketing programs for the County’s diverse agricultural offerings.
4. Assist farmers to maintain an economically viable agricultural and forest industry.
5. Support the ability of commercial watermen and recreational fishermen to have access to sustainable fisheries.
6. Focus agricultural preservation programs to those areas with a land use and zoning of agricultural conservation and designated priority preservation areas.

Actions

1. To supplement the existing land preservation programs the County offers, create a County purchase of development rights program using bond funding, a County transfer tax, and/or additional sources to ensure a dedicated funding source for the program. If a transfer tax is utilized, 50% of the money could be used for land preservation, and 50% could be used to fund infrastructure in priority funding areas to promote growth away from resource-based industries. Assign the Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board authority to oversee and make recommendations regarding operation of the program.
2. Explore the use of a revolving loan fund for land trust to acquire and protect properties in farming areas. Establish a budget sufficient to start this preservation tool.
3. Revise the TDR program to incentivize their use, including amendments to the Forest Conservation Ordinance to allow TDRs from forested properties to satisfy requirements of the Forest Conservation Act. Continue to designate productive agricultural and forest land as sending areas for TDRs. Establish a workgroup to examine ways to balance TDR supply and demand as related to sending and receiving areas and make specific recommendations.
4. Expand the function and role of the existing Agricultural Land Preservation Advisory Board to monitor issues related to agriculture, forestry, and fisheries. Include a charge to the board to meet with state and local agencies that work with these natural resource-based industries and report at least annually to the County commissioners.
5. Conduct a review of regulations to make it easier for agriculture, forestry, and seafood businesses to prosper, including:
 - Policies for agricultural worker housing.
 - Allowing processing facilities for livestock.
 - Promoting the development of Charles County’s forest industry.

- 
- Amending the zoning ordinance to specifically allow value added processing, agro-tourism, and ecotourism uses.
 - 6. Consider developing an area plan for key rural and eco-sensitive areas, to support implementation of the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan.
 - 7. Work closely with the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission to grow the agricultural, forestry, and seafood economies in Charles County and Southern Maryland. Consider hiring a full-time agricultural marketing specialist if the role of the Commission diminishes.
 - 8. Review the County’s right to farm ordinance to ensure it is current and works to retain farm owners’ property rights.
 - 9. Work with the Board of Education to encourage agriculture classes in the public schools and return of the Future Farmers of America program.
 - 10. Review regulations and recommend changes that would assist in retaining family members who continue farming operations.
 - 11. Explore methods to retain large contiguous tracts of forest and discourage their fragmentation.
 - 12. Promote sustainable forest industries and the use of forest stewardship planning throughout the county.
 - 13. Encourage aquaculture enterprises, including the participation in the Maryland Department of Natural Resources oyster gardening program.

The existing landscape of Charles County is defined by its natural lands including forests, rivers, abundant wetlands, and over 300 miles of shoreline. These areas support biodiversity and provide other ecosystem services needed by the public, such as wetlands filtering drinking water and forests cleansing the air. Areas preserved for the natural resource values within the County also provide abundant opportunities for outdoor recreation and serve a major function in defining County character and quality of life of residents. The natural landscape of Charles County generally consists of:

- Nearly level upland plateaus
- Steeply sloped areas between uplands and low terraces
- Shoreline stream terraces
- Floodplains and tidal marsh

Connecting People with Nature

Parks, open spaces, and other preserved lands in Charles County are not only considered highly valuable for the critical natural resource value, and functions they protect, but also for the abundant and varied opportunities they provide for outdoor recreation and engagement with nature. This has been significant to the quality of life for residents for many years. The desirability of experiencing the natural beauty of the County’s landscape is also sought out by visitors. In fact, the 2012 “Charles County Tourism Destination Plan Study” identified “natural resources,” including State and County parks, as a primary magnet for visitors to the County.



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Section 5: Recommendations & Action Table

Goals and recommendations of the 2022 Land Preservation, Parks, and Recreation Plan considered all information gathered through the planning process, as well as existing overarching plans and programs of the state and county that guide land preservation and recreation service provision for the public.

The 2022 goals build off of Charles County’s current and past goals, existing service provision, and current needs identified through the level of service analysis and staff documents. Goals are listed in no particular order of importance, with each one being of equal significance in maintaining and enhancing open space preservation and provision of recreational services and amenities to County residents and visitors. Charles County’s FY2022-2026 Capital Improvement Program for parks and recreation includes a series of projects over the next five years that directly support the achievement of these goals.

Approved Capital Improvement Projects

- Park Maintenance
- Various Pedestrian & Bicycle Facilities
- Popes Creek Waterfront Phase II
- Waldorf Park Development PH I
- Waldorf Park Development PH II
- Smallwood Drive Shared Use Paths Phase I
- Smallwood Drive Shared Use Paths Phase II
- La Plata Farm Park Master Plan
- La Plata Farm Park Development, Phase I
- Mallows Bay Restrooms
- Synthetic Turf Fields

Action Table

Goal 1: Continue to look for opportunities to plan for new facilities and amenities.	
Recommendations	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.a Appropriate funding mechanisms to meet identified needs for park and facility additions. These include and are not limited to, new parks, competitive aquatic facility, athletic fields, biking and walking trails.	Ongoing Priority
1.1.b. Seek opportunities for additional water access points for kayaks, canoes, fishing, etc.	Ongoing Priority
1.1.c. Designate fitness opportunities for both indoor and outdoor access. Consider an indoor fitness facility and adding more fitness equipment along trails and in community parks.	Ongoing Priority



Goal 1: Continue to look for opportunities to plan for new facilities and amenities.	
Recommendations	Timeframe to Complete
1.1.d. Accessibility study and plan for existing of Parks and Recreation facilities. Further development of Therapeutic Recreation programming.	Ongoing Priority
Goal 2: Continue to improve and strategize organizational efficiencies.	
Recommendations	Timeframe to Complete
2.1.a. Research and formulate strategies to improve the communication methods through successful methods of communication with potential expansion of the methods and frequency of communication.	Ongoing Priority
2.1.b. Continue to engage with the public and stakeholders to identify and capitalize on opportunities to enhance existing parks and recreation opportunities.	Ongoing Short-Term
2.1.c. Develop organizational strategies through an overall Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism long range Master Plan.	Ongoing Priority
2.1.d. Application for Accreditation; Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies through the National Recreation and Parks Association.	Ongoing Short/Mid-Term
Goal 3: Continue to improve programming and natural resource opportunities within existing and future parks, recreation, and open space areas.	
Recommendations	Timeframe to Complete
3.1.a. Make open spaces a key consideration when procuring new property or redeveloping existing properties.	Ongoing
3.1.b. Consider creating a balance between passive and active recreation opportunities as new programs are developed focusing on natural resources.	Ongoing Short-Term
3.1.c. Evaluate existing facilities for flood mitigation challenges and incorporate future plan updates to ensure flood hazards for facilities are addressed.	Ongoing Short/Mid-Term



Goal 4: Continue to build an interconnected system of trails and paths throughout the County for pedestrian/cycling use only.	
Recommendations	Timeframe to Complete
4.1.a. Continue to follow and make updates and implement changes to the bicycle and pedestrian master plan goals that impact the department.	Ongoing
4.1.b. Continue to support the Maryland Department of Natural Resources efforts to create and promote water trails.	Ongoing
4.1.c. Evaluate existing trail corridors, rights-of-ways, and other potential trail linkages for future development.	Ongoing
4.1.d. Add and promote trail information on a consistent basis through all media and printed opportunities. Consider adding elements to the trails with factual information about Charles County.	Ongoing Long-Term



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Appendix A: Charles County Demographic Profile

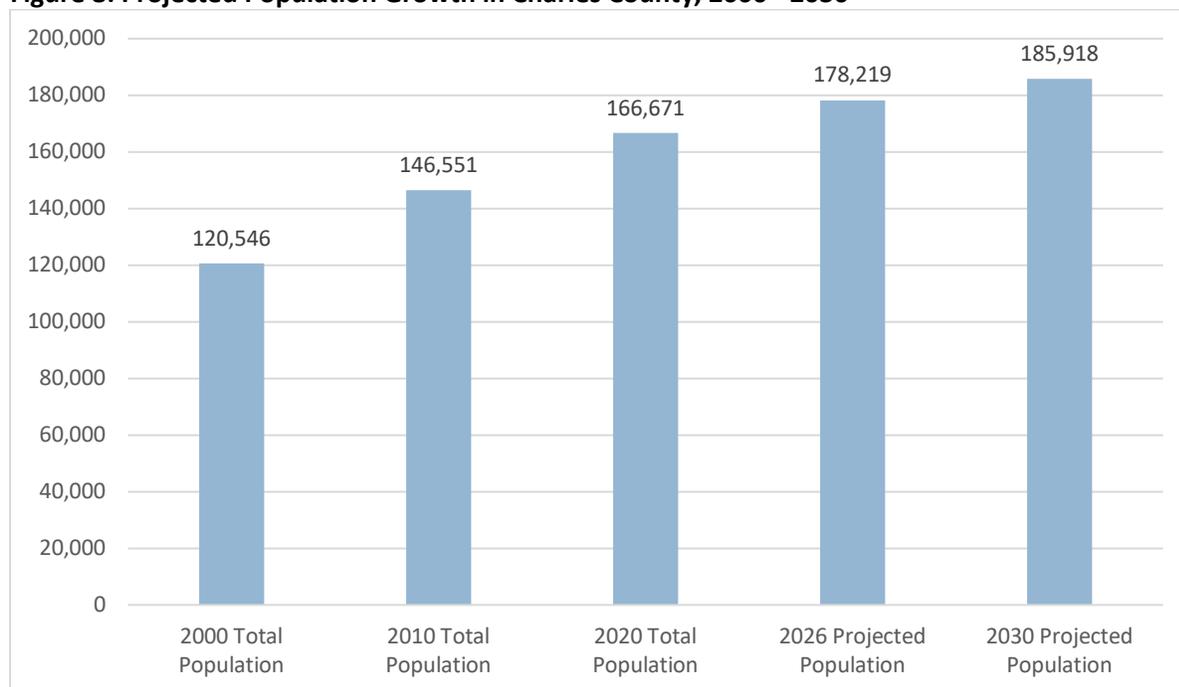
Charles County demographic profile was developed to provide an analysis of household and economic data in the area, helping to understand the type of park and recreation components that may best serve the community in accordance to the Charles County Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) to identify the best source for population data and estimates. Data referenced throughout this report was primarily sourced from Esri Business Analyst as of January 2021, utilizing the most up-to-date data available from the U.S. Census. In addition, when applicable, other sources were referenced such as the American Community Survey and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s County Health Rankings for data related to health outcomes. Comparisons to the State of Maryland and the United States were referenced to provide additional context and understanding to the demographic make-up of Charles County.

Population

Charles County has experienced rapid growth in the past two decades. From a population of just over 120,000 in 2000, Charles County added over 48,000 new residents over the past two decades. In 2020, the population in the County was estimated at 166,671 – with an anticipated 1.08% compound annual growth rate between 2021 and 2026. If this growth rate continues, the population could reach 185,918 or more in 2030.



Figure 8: Projected Population Growth in Charles County, 2000 - 2030



Source: Esri Business Analyst

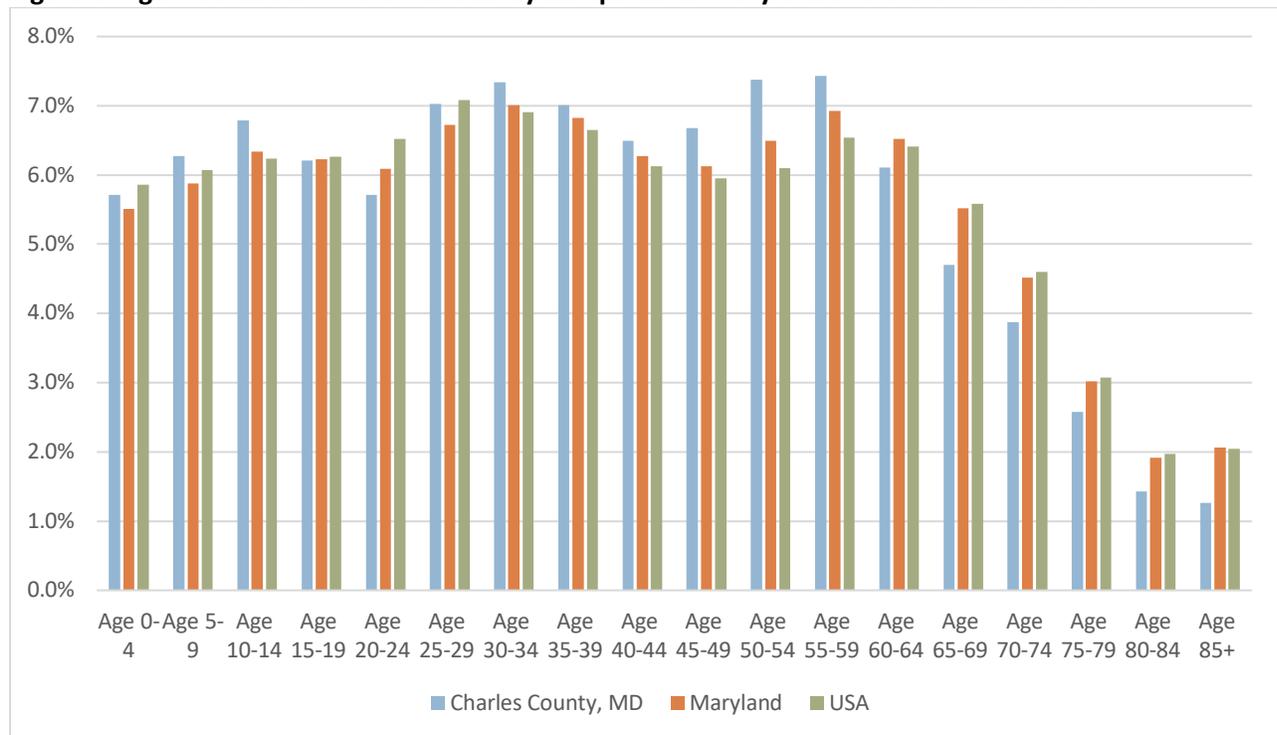
Age

According to Esri Business Analyst, the median age in Charles County was 38.5 years old in 2021, younger than the State of Maryland (39.6) and the United States (38.8). The median age is projected to increase to 39.1 in the County by 2026.

38.5
Median Age
Source: 2021 Esri Business Analyst

The age distribution in Charles County in 2021 was relatively evenly distributed with a mix of younger families, middle-aged adults, and senior population. In general, the State of Maryland had a higher population of older adults than the County, with those 60+ making up a larger percentage of the statewide population.

Figure 9: Age Distribution in Charles County Compared to Maryland and the United States



Source: 2021 Esri Business Analyst

Table 7 below demonstrates the change in age groups amongst residents. From 2020 to 2021, those between the ages of 45 to 49 had the largest decline in population (-2.8%), while those between 55 and 75 years old experienced more growth of over 1% in each age cohort.

Table 7: Age Group Distribution from 2010 to 2021

	2010	2021	% Change
Age 0-4 (%)	6.4%	5.7%	-0.7%
Age 5-9 (%)	7.0%	6.3%	-0.7%
Age 10-14 (%)	8.0%	6.8%	-1.2%
Age 15-19 (%)	7.9%	6.2%	-1.7%
Age 20-24 (%)	5.9%	5.7%	-0.2%
Age 25-29 (%)	5.9%	7.0%	1.2%
Age 30-34 (%)	5.9%	7.3%	1.5%
Age 35-39 (%)	7.2%	7.0%	-0.2%
Age 40-44 (%)	8.7%	6.5%	-2.2%
Age 45-49 (%)	9.2%	6.7%	-2.6%
Age 50-54 (%)	7.7%	7.4%	-0.3%
Age 55-59 (%)	6.0%	7.4%	1.4%
Age 60-64 (%)	4.9%	6.1%	1.2%
Age 65-69 (%)	3.5%	4.7%	1.2%
Age 70-74 (%)	2.3%	3.9%	1.6%
Age 75-79 (%)	1.6%	2.6%	1.0%
Age 80-84 (%)	1.0%	1.4%	0.4%
Age 85+ (%)	1.0%	1.3%	0.3%

Source: Esri Business Analyst

Diversity in Charles County

Understanding the race and ethnic character of Charles County residents is important because it can be reflective of the diverse history, values, and heritage of the community. This type of information can assist the County in creating and offering recreational programs that are relevant and meaningful to residents. In addition, this type of data when combined with the Level of Service analysis can be used in finding gaps and disparities when it comes to equitable access to parks.

Figure 10: Race Comparison for Total Population in Charles County

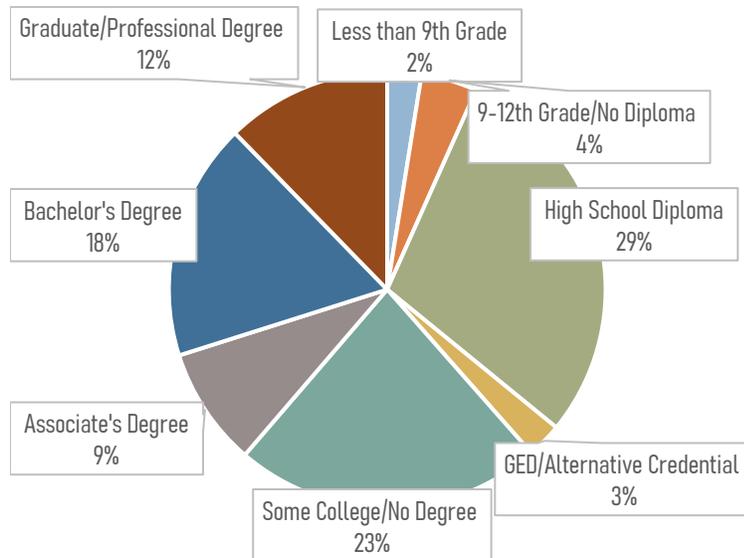


Source: Esri Business Analyst, 2020

Educational Attainment

Figure 11 below shows the percentage of residents (25+) that obtained various levels of education in Charles County. Only 6% of the residents had not received a high school or equivalent diploma. Over 18% had completed a bachelor's degree, and 12% had obtained a Graduate or Professional Level Degree.

Figure 11: Educational Attainment in Charles County



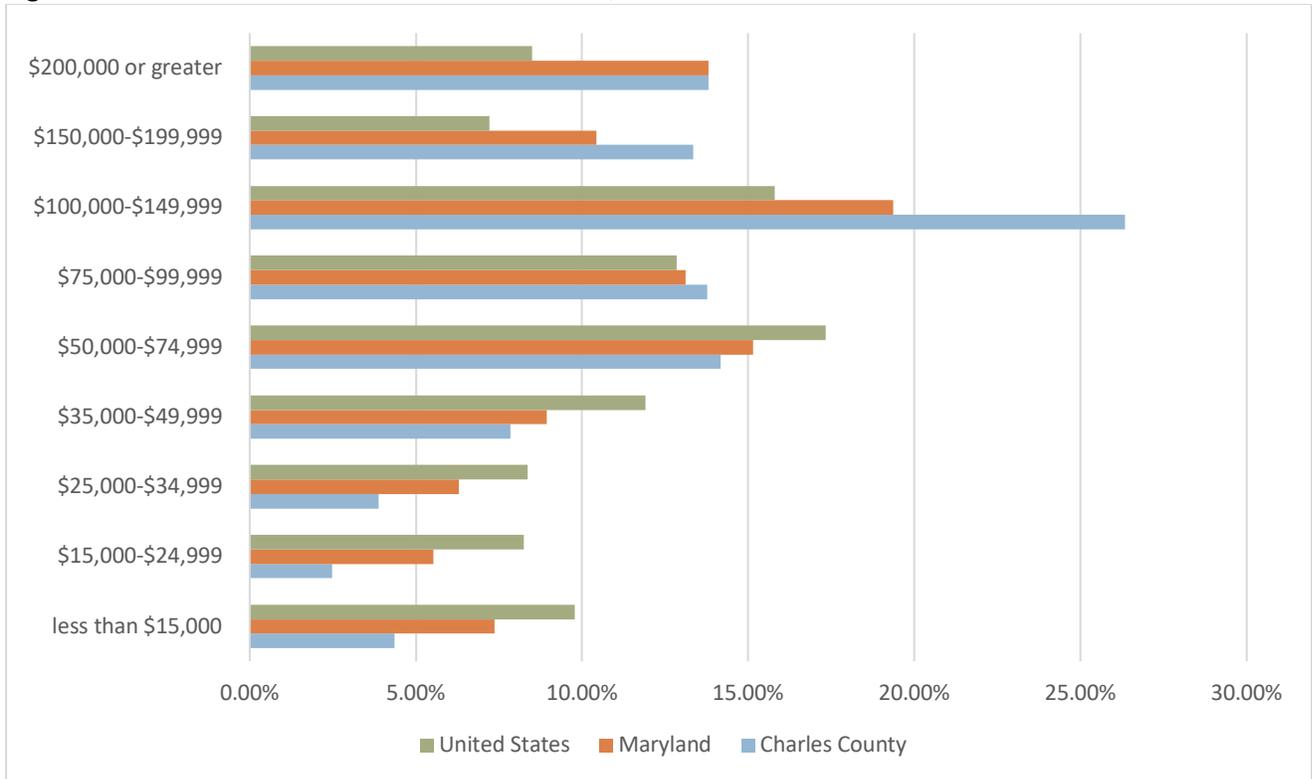
Household Overview



According to the American Community Survey, approximately 6.15% of County households were under the poverty level, with a median household income of \$104,120. The household income in the County was higher than the State of Maryland (\$86,104) and the United States (\$64,730). Approximately 26% of

Charles County households made between \$100,000 to \$149,999, as seen in *Figure 12*. Only 4.3% of households made less than \$15,000 per year.

Figure 12: Median Household Income Distribution, 2021 Estimates



Source: Esri Business Analyst

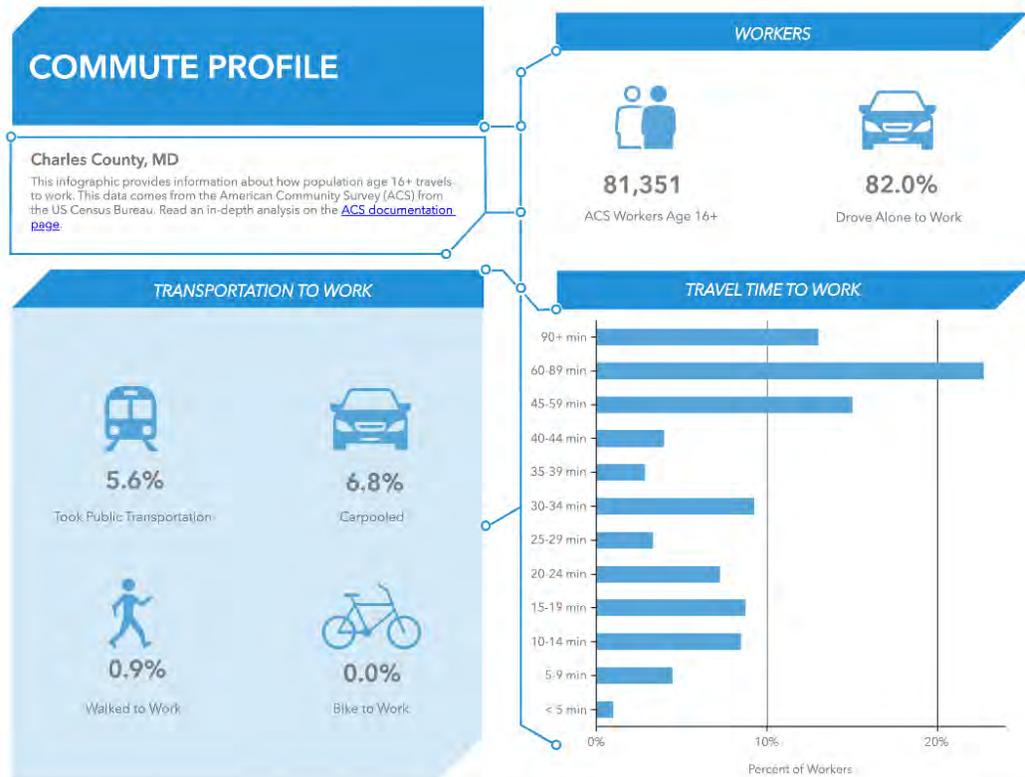
Employment

In 2021, an estimated 5.2% of Charles County’s population was unemployed, lower than the State of Maryland (6.3%) and the United States (6.2%). Approximately 71% of the population was employed in white collar positions, which encompass jobs where employees typically perform managerial, technical, administrative, and/or professional capacities. Another 17% of the County’s population were employed in blue collar positions, such as construction, maintenance, etc. Finally, 11% of Charles County residents were employed in the service industry.

In terms of commuting, most residents chose to commute alone to work. As estimated 82% of working residents drive alone to work – with 19% spending seven or more hours per week commuting to and from work. The infographic below shows the types of transportation to work. Less than one percent of residents walk or bike to work – compared to 2.6% in the State of Maryland.



Figure 13: Commute Profile in Charles County, MD



This infographic contains data provided by American Community Survey (ACS). The vintage of the data is 2015-2019. © 2022 Esri

Source: Esri Business Analyst

8.8%
 Live with a Disability
 Source: American Community Survey

People with Disabilities

According to the American Community Survey, 8.8% of Charles County population in 2020 experienced living with some sort of disability. This is lower than the state at 11.2% but still reaffirms the importance of inclusive programming and ADA transition plans for parks and facilities.

Respondents to the American Community Survey who report any one of the six disability types (identified below) are considered to have a disability. Likewise, an individual may identify as experiencing more than one disability. Therefore, the percentages below do not equal the total percentage of individuals who live with a disability in the county.

Types of disabilities within Charles County:

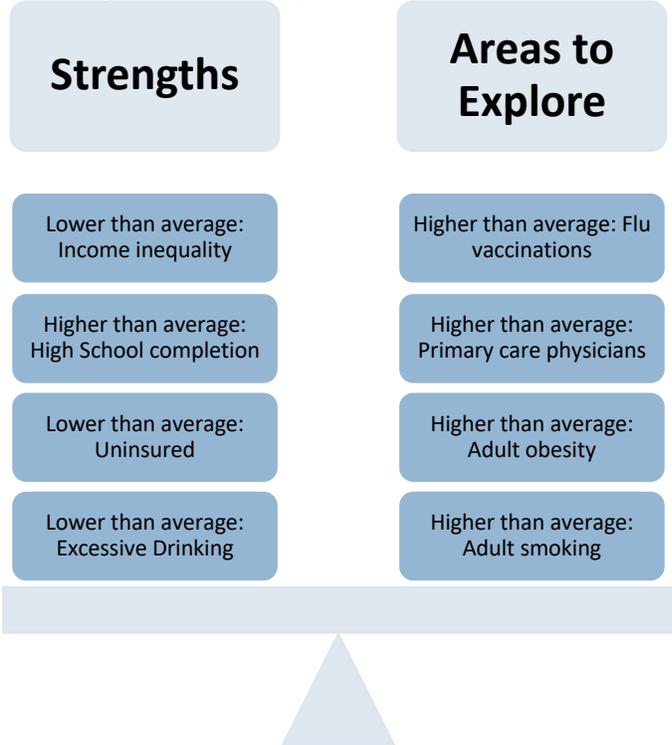
- Hearing difficulty – 2.4%
- Vision difficulty – 1.3%
- Cognitive difficulty – 3.5%
- Ambulatory difficulty – 4.9%
- Self-care difficulty – 1.9%
- Independent living difficulty – 4.3%



Health and Wellness

Understanding the status of a community’s health can help inform policies related to recreation and fitness. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s *County Health Rankings and Roadmaps* provides annual insight on the general health of national, state, and county populations. Charles County was ranked among the healthiest counties in Maryland; in 2020, it ranked 12th out of 23 Maryland Counties for Health Outcomes. *Figure 14* below provides additional information regarding the County’s health data as it may relate to parks, recreation, and community services.³ The strengths indicated below are those areas where Charles County ranked higher than top U.S. performers or the State of Maryland. The areas to explore are those where the County ranked lower than the State or top U.S. performers.

Figure 14: Charles County Health Rankings Overview



Source: Robert Wood Johnson Foundation’s *County Health Rankings and Roadmaps*

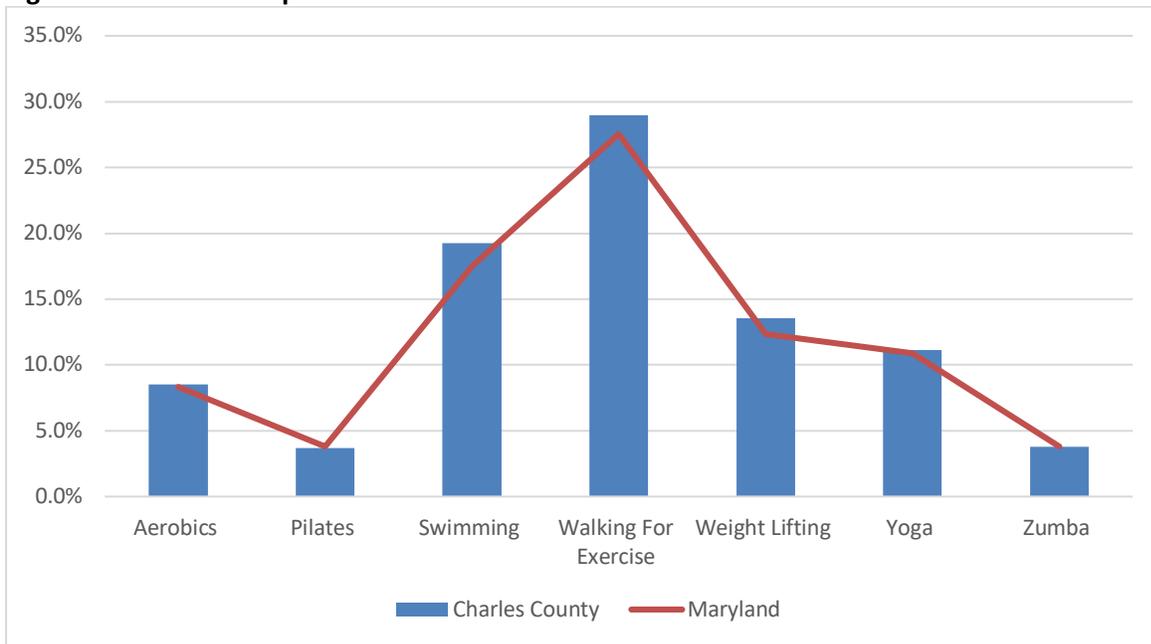
³ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, *County Health Rankings 2020*, <http://www.Countyhealthrankings.org>

Appendix B: Park and Recreation Influencing

The following pages summarize some of the key trends that could impact Charles County Land Preservation Parks and Recreation Plan (LPPRP) over the next five to ten years.

In addition, Esri Business Analyst provides estimates for activity participation and consumer behavior based on a specific methodology and survey data to make up what Esri terms “Market Potential Index.” The following charts showcase the participation in fitness activities, outdoor recreation, and sports teams for adults 25 and older, compared to the State of Maryland. The activities with the highest participation include walking for exercise (29%), swimming (19.3%), hiking (16%), jogging/running (13.7%), weightlifting (13.6%), and camping trips (13.6%).

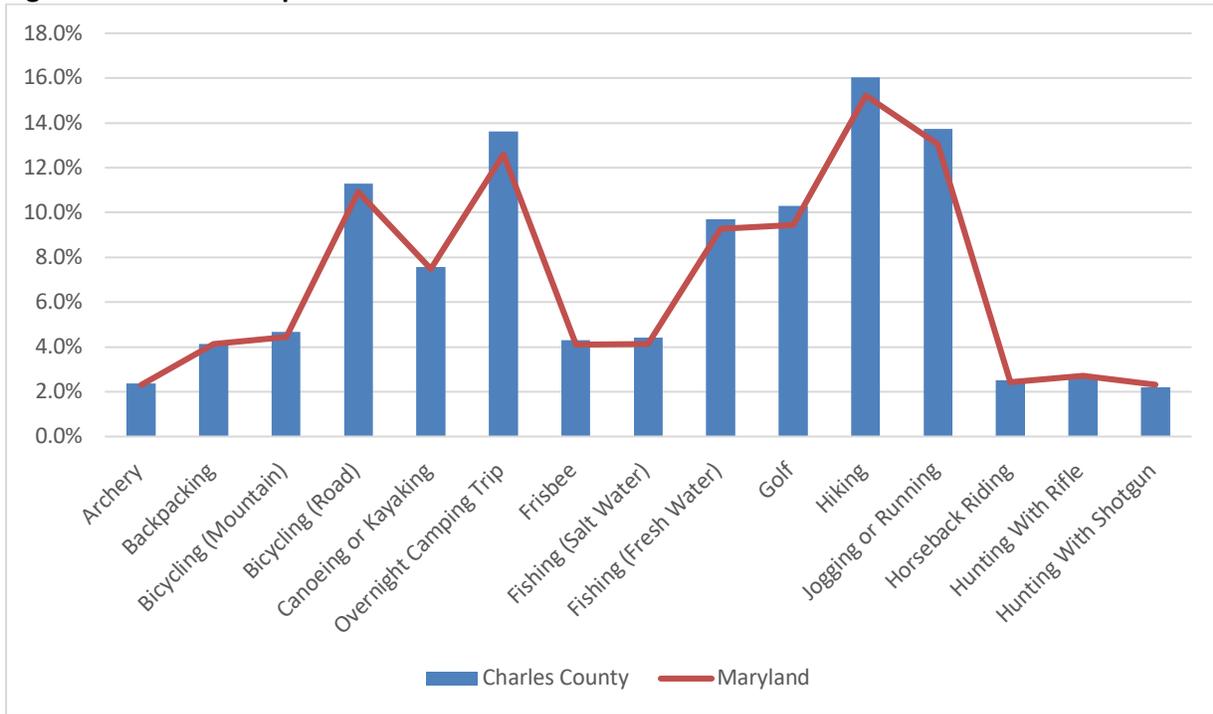
Figure 15: Adult Participation for Fitness Activities



Source: Esri Business Analyst

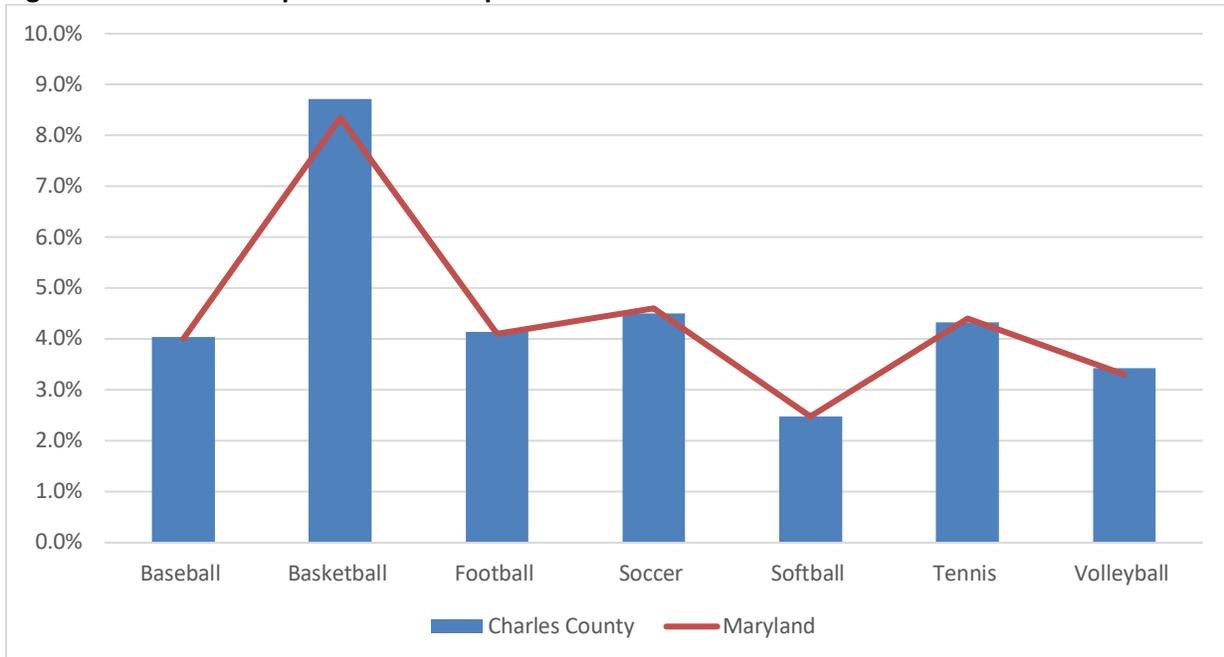


Figure 16: Adult Participation in Outdoor Recreation



Source: Esri Business Analyst

Figure 17: Adult Participation in Team Sports



Source: Esri Business Analyst



Active Transportation

In many surveys and studies on participation in recreational activities, walking, running, jogging, and cycling are universally rated as the most popular activities among youths and adults. These activities are attractive as they require little equipment, or financial investment, to get started, and are open to participation to nearly all segments of the population. For these reasons, participation in these activities are often promoted as a means of spurring physical activity, and increasing public health. The design of a community's infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity – where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking in a community can have a major impact on improving public health and life expectancy.⁴

Public health trends related to cycling and walking include:

- Quantified health benefits of active transportation can outweigh any risks associated with the activities by as much as 77 to 1, and add more years to our lives than are lost from inhaled air pollution and traffic injuries.
- Regular cyclists took 7.4 sick days per year, while non-bicyclists took 8.7 sick days per year.
- The proportion of children who live within a mile of school has decreased overtime. In 1969, 48 percent of children walked or biked to school, compared to 2009, when 35 percent of children walked or biked to school.⁵

National cycling trends:

- There has been a gradual trend of increasing bicycling and walking to work since 2005.
- Infrastructure to support biking communities is becoming more commonly funded in communities.
- Bike share systems, making bicycles available to the public for low-cost, short-term use, have been sweeping the nation.

ADA Compliance

On July 26, 1990, the federal government officially recognized the needs of people with disabilities through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). This civil rights law expanded rights for activities and services offered by both state and local governmental entities (Title II) and non-profit/for-profit entities (Title III). Parks and Recreation agencies are expected to comply by the legal mandate; which means eliminating physical barriers to provide access to facilities, and providing reasonable accommodations in regard to recreational programs through inclusive policies and procedures.⁶

It is a requirement that agencies develop an ADA Transition Plan, which details how physical and structural barriers will be removed to facilitate access to programs and services. The Transition Plan also acts as a planning tool for budgeting and accountability.

⁴ "Parks & Recreation | Active Living Research." *Activelivingresearch.org*, 2015, activelivingresearch.org/taxonomy/parks-recreation. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.

⁵ "SRTS Guide: The Decline of Walking and Bicycling." *Saferoutesinfo.org*, 2011, guide.saferoutesinfo.org/introduction/the_decline_of_walking_and_bicycling.cfm. Accessed 1 Nov. 2021.

⁶ "Changes Are Coming to ADA -- New Regulation Standards Expected for Campgrounds, Parks Beaches." *Recmanagement.com*, 2012, recmanagement.com/feature_print.php?fid=201211fe03. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.



Administrative Trends in Parks & Recreation

County parks and recreation structures and delivery systems have changed and more alternative methods of delivering services are emerging. Certain services are being contracted out and cooperative agreements with non-profit groups and other public institutions are being developed. Newer partners include the health system, social services, justice system, education, the corporate sector, and community service agencies. These partnerships reflect both a broader interpretation of the mandate of parks and recreation agencies and the increased willingness of other sectors to work together to address community issues. The relationship with health agencies is vital in promoting wellness. The traditional relationship with education and the sharing of facilities through joint-use agreements is evolving into cooperative planning and programming aimed at addressing youth inactivity levels and community needs.⁷

In addition, the role of parks and recreation management has shifted beyond traditional facility oversight and activity programming. The ability to evaluate and interpret data is a critical component of strategic decision making. In an article posted in Parks and Recreation Magazine, February 2019, there are several components that allow agencies to keep up with administrative trends and become an agent of change.⁸

1. Develop a digital transformation strategy – how will your agency innovate and adapt to technology?
2. Anticipate needs of the community through data – what information from your facilities, programs, and services can be collected and utilized for decision making?
3. Continuous education - How can you educate yourself and your team to have more knowledge and skills as technology evolves?
4. Focus on efficiency – in what ways can your operations be streamlined?
5. Embrace change as a leader – how can you help your staff to see the value in new systems and processes?
6. Reach out digitally – be sure that the public knows how to find you and ways that they can be involved.

Adventure Programming

Many people used to look to travel or tourist agencies for adventurous excursions. However, more government agencies have started to offer exciting experiences such as zip lining, challenge/obstacle courses, and other risk-taking elements on a local level. These agencies may form partnerships with specialized companies to provide adventure packages. Private companies may hire and train their own staff, maintain equipment, and develop marketing campaigns. A lease agreement may grant the county a certain percentage of gross revenues.

Agency Accreditation

Parks and recreation agencies are affirming their competencies and value through accreditation. This is achieved by an agency's commitment to 150 standards. Accreditation is a distinguished mark of

⁷ Brian Stapleton, "The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec" Parks and Recreation, February 2019; <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/>

⁸ <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/>



excellence that affords external recognition of an organization’s commitment to quality and improvement.

The National Recreation and Parks Association administratively sponsors two distinct accreditation programs: The Council on Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism and Related Professions (COAPRT) approves academic institutions and the Commission for Accreditation of Parks and Recreation Agencies (CAPRA) approves agencies. It is the only national accreditation of parks and recreation agencies, and is a valuable measure of an agency’s overall quality of operation, management, and service to the community.

Aquatics and Water Recreation Trends

Aquatic facilities are locations where individuals may get exercise, participate in sports, and have competitive fun. Aquatic centers and county waterparks are one of the fastest expanding divisions of the water leisure industry, according to the World Waterpark Association.⁹ According to the 2021 Aquatic Trends Report, “some 16.7% of rec centers in 2020 said they had built a new aquatic facility in the past several years, compared to 6.1% in 2019.”¹⁰

Even though these centers are one of the fastest growing segments in the water leisure industry, their budget will still decide their ability to maintain their equipment, which facility design trends are implemented, and their ability to meet the needs of the community. Fortunately, even with the impact that the pandemic has had, park and camp respondents predict their average running costs to be the same in 2021 as they were in 2019.¹¹

Some of these opportunities could include aquatic therapy and aerobics which can also assist in the healing process from injuries. These facilities can greatly transform a person’s health which is why the World Health Organization has stressed that “children’s physical and social environments are significant determinants of their overall health and well-being”. Having access to an aquatic area often improves someone’s overall health when they take part in swimming, water aerobics, Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) yoga, Aqua-Yoga/Balance Programs, and/or water basketball, volleyball, or water polo.

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) mandates accessible access to aquatic centers. People with disabilities are able to utilize aquatic facilities with the assistance of zero-entry pool access, ramps, or chair lifts. Another water accessibility issue is one of racial disparity. Studies have shown that “64 percent of black children and 45 percent of Hispanic children have little to no swimming ability, compared with 40 percent of white children”. Many facilities have outreach programs focused primarily on low-income, ethnic, and water-phobic populations to address these discrepancies and reach people who lack swimming skills due to a fear of water.¹²

⁹ “Press.” *Waterparks.org*, 2020, www.waterparks.org/web/Press.aspx. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.

¹⁰ Tipping, E. (2021, February). *Just Keep Swimming: The 2021 Aquatic Trends Report*. Recreation Management. <https://recmanagement.com/feature/202102SU01>.

¹¹ Tucker, P., Gilliland, J., & Irwin, J. D. (2007). Splashpads, Swings, and Shade. *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, 98(3), 198–202. <https://doi.org/10.1007/bf03403712>

¹² Amico, L. (2019, April 10). *3 Emerging Trends in Aquatic Adventure Recreation*. AquaClimb. <https://www.aquaclimb.com/blog/2019/4/10/3-emerging-trends-in-aquatic-adventure-recreation>.



Splash pads are a great service that can remedy situations where people are not eager to submerge themselves into the water but are still looking to cool off. This type of facility is more cost efficient as it requires no lifeguard, uses less water than a pool, requires less maintenance, and the initial construction of splash pads also costs less than swimming pools. Splash pads oftentimes have longer hours and seasons than pools, so not surprisingly parents that were interviewed when frequenting parks expressed that they wished that wading pools had longer hours of operation as well as a longer outdoor season.

Another comparison between pools and splash pads can be made by how they can improve revenue. A straightforward way to add revenue to an already existing splash pad is by building a pavilion for large parties for utilization for rentals.

Pools can also add additional elements to increase their revenue such as pool zip lines, “ninja” climbing nets, and poolside rock climbing walls. The AquaZip’N, AquaNinja, and AquaClimb are examples of these safe adventure elements that are trending at the moment. In addition, aquatic centers can consider less permanent amenities such as log rolls, giant inflatable obstacle courses, and screen projectors for “dive-in” movies.

Before and After-School Care Programs

Many parks and recreation agencies offer before and after-school care programs. These programs may include fitness/play opportunities, healthy snack, and tutoring/homework services. According to an NRPA poll, 90 percent of U.S. adults believe that before-and after-school programs offered by local park and recreation agencies are important¹³. According to the 2018 Out-of-School Time Report, approximately 55 percent of local parks and recreation agencies offer after-school programming. Parks and recreation professionals consider the top five benefits of afterschool programs provided to youth are:¹⁴

- Safe spaces to play outside of school
- Free or affordable places for health and wellness opportunities
- Opportunities to network and socialize with others
- Experience nature and outdoors
- Educational support and learning opportunities

¹³ Parks and Recreation: The Leaders in Before and Afterschool Care, *National Recreation and Parks Association*. Accessed December 2019. <https://www.nrpa.org/publications-research/park-pulse/parks-and-recreation-the-leaders-in-before-and-after-school-care/>

¹⁴ 2018 Out-of-School Time Report, *National Recreation and Parks Association* Accessed February 2020: <https://www.nrpa.org/contentassets/c76ea3d5bcee4595a17aac298a5f2b7a/out-of-school-time-survey-results-report-2018.pdf>

Figure 18: Overview of NRPA Park Pulse Report on Before- and After-School Care

NRPA PARK PULSE

Parks and Recreation: Preferred Provider of Before- and After-School Care

90% of adults believe it's important for park and recreation agencies to provide affordable before- and after-school care to children and young adults.

These services include tutoring and homework help, fitness and play opportunities, and the availability of healthy snacks.

Regardless of income, age, education or having children in the household, people agree, providing affordable before- and after-school care for our nation's youth is important!

Each month, through a poll of 1,000 U.S. residents focused on park and recreation issues, NRPA Park Pulse helps tell the park and recreation story. Questions span from the serious to the more lighthearted. The survey was conducted by Wakefield Research (www.wakefieldresearch.com).

Visit nrpa.org/park-pulse for more information.

NRPA National Recreation and Park Association
Because everyone deserves a great park

Source: NRPA Park Pulse Report

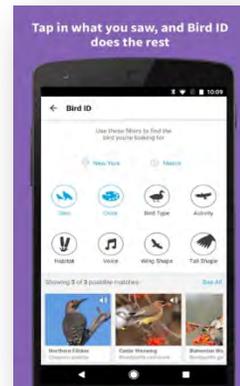
Bird Watching

It is estimated that in 2016, 45.1 million people participated in bird-watching, according to the latest U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation.¹⁵ Of all participants, 86 percent of them observed wild birds around their home.

The most popular activity was feeding birds and other wildlife, at 70%, while observing birds and photographing them were also favored. Approximately 30.5 million people participated in wildlife photography in 2016. Pennsylvania, located in the Mid-Atlantic region, was one of the highest populations that watched wildlife at 35 percent participation, as seen in the *Figure 19*.

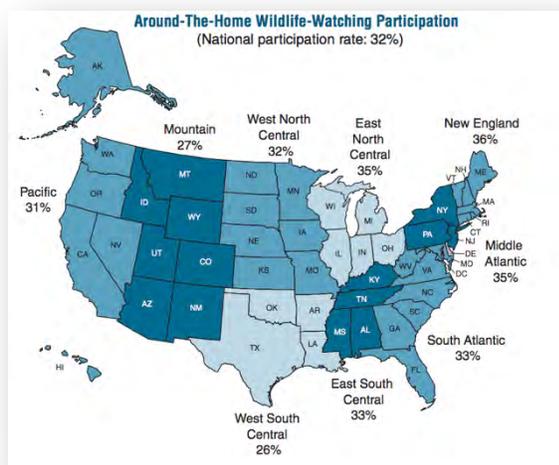
Smart phone apps offered from organizations, such as the National Audubon Society and the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, offer beginners and birding veterans the opportunity to identify hundreds of bird species by size, color, activity, habitat, wing shape, voice, and tail shape. These tools offer unique new programming opportunities for passive recreation.

Audubon Bird Guide App



Source: Audubon Bird Guide App, National Audubon Society

Figure 19: Participation in At-Home Wildlife-Watching



Source: 2016 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Survey

Community Centers

Community centers are public gathering places where people of the community may socialize, participate in recreational or educational activities, obtain information, and seek counseling or support services, amongst other things.¹⁶ Several studies have found a correlation between the outdoor leisure involvement that community centers provide and a person's greater environmental concern. The main impact from the addition of these centers is the improvement in community health, social connectivity, and mental well-being.

A national long-term study conducted of over 17,000 teens who frequented recreation

facilities found that they were 75 percent more likely to engage in the highest category of moderate to strenuous physical exercise. Since these activities that they partake in involve a considerable amount of effort, the benefits have been shown to include "reduced obesity, a diminished risk of disease, an enhanced immune system and most importantly, increased life expectancy".¹⁷

¹⁵ 2016 U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service National Survey of Fishing, Hunting, and Wildlife Associated Recreation https://wsfrprograms.fws.gov/Subpages/NationalSurvey/nat_survey2016.pdf

¹⁶ *Community centers*. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2020, January 21). <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/community-centers>.

¹⁷ National Association of Community Health Centers, Inc. (2012, August). Powering Healthier Communities: November 2010 Community Health Centers Address the Social Determinants of Health.

Clubs and sports offered by community centers also strengthen social connections and reduce social isolation.¹⁸ Along with an increase in social connectivity brought by community centers comes a sense of satisfaction with a person’s choice of friends and perceived success in life. The evidence strongly suggests that this satisfaction can rise to much higher levels if participation in outdoor recreation begins in childhood.

The following infographic demonstrates the potential for community services in offering non-traditional services.

Figure 20: Non-Traditional Services Desired in Community Centers



Source: NRPA Park Pulse

¹⁸ *Community centers*. County Health Rankings & Roadmaps. (2020, January 21). <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/take-action-to-improve-health/what-works-for-health/strategies/community-centers>.



Community & Special Events

Community-wide events and festivals often act as essential place-making activities for residents, economic drivers, and urban brand builders. Chad Kaydo describes the phenomenon in the *Governing Magazine*: County and municipal officials and entrepreneurs “see the power of cultural festivals, innovation-focused business conferences and the like as a way to spur short-term tourism while shaping an image of the host city as a cool, dynamic location where companies and citizens in modern, creative industries can thrive.”¹⁹ According to the 2020 Event Trends Report by EventBrite, the following trends are expected to impact event planners and community builders in the coming years:²⁰

- Focus on sustainability: Zero-waste events are quickly becoming an expectation. Some of the primary ways of prioritizing environmental sustainability include e-tickets, reusable, or biodegradable items, offering vegan/vegetarian options, encouraging public transport and carpooling, and working with venues that recycle.
- Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): Ensuring that the venue is inclusive to not only all abilities by offering ADA facilities, but also welcoming to all races, ethnicities, and backgrounds through signage, messaging, and the lineup of speakers. Ways to incorporate a focus on inclusivity include planning for diversity through speakers, talent, and subject matter, enacting a code of conduct that promotes equity, and possibly providing scholarships to attendees.
- Engaging Experiences: Being able to customize and cater the facility to create immersive events that bring together culture, art, music, and elements of a company’s brand will be critical in creating a more authentic experience

Community Gardens

Communities around the country are building community gardens for a number of far-reaching environmental and social impacts. According to GreenLeaf Communities, which supports scientific research in environmental and human health, community gardens offer benefits including:²¹

Environmental	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing waste through composting • Improving water infiltration • Increasing biodiversity of animals and plants • Improve air and soil quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase intake of vegetables and fruits • Promotes relaxation and improves mental health • Increases physical activity • Reduces risk of obesity and obesity-related diseases

Some studies show that community gardens can improve the well-being of the entire community by bringing residents together and creating social ties. This activity can reduce crime, particularly if gardens are utilized in vacant lots. In fact, vacant land has the opposite effect of community gardens, including increased litter, chemical and tire dumping, drug use, and decreased property values. By creating community gardens, neighborhoods can teach useful skills in gardening, food production, selling, and business. The National Recreation and Park Association published an in-depth guide to building a

¹⁹ Kaydo, Chad. “Cities Create Music, Cultural Festivals to Make Money.” *Governing*, *Governing*, 18 Dec. 2013, www.governing.com/archive/gov-cities-create-music-festivals.html. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.

²⁰ “The 2020 Event Trends Report- Eventbrite.” Eventbrite US Blog, 2020, www.eventbrite.com/blog/academy/2020-event-trends-report/. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.

²¹ Katie DeMuro, “The Many Benefits of Community Gardens” *Greenleaf Communities*, <https://greenleafcommunities.org/the-many-benefits-of-community-gardens>, accessed January 2019



community garden in parks through the Grow Your Park Initiative, which can be found on their website.²²

Conservation

One of the key pillars of parks and recreation is the role that it plays in conservation. Managing and protecting open space, providing opportunities for people to connect with nature, and educating communities about conservation are all incredibly important. One of the key components of conservation is addressing climate change. Local parks and recreation can help by building climate resilient communities through water management, green infrastructure, and sustainability. A report by NRPA in 2017 titled “Park and Recreation Sustainability Practices” surveyed over 400 park and recreation agencies and found the top five ways that local departments are taking action on conservation and climate change include:

- Alternative Transportation – 77% reduce carbon footprint through offering transportation alternatives
- Watershed Management – 70% adopt protective measures for watershed management
- Air Quality – 53% plant and manage tree canopy that improves air quality
- Sustainable Education – 52% educate the public about sustainability practices
- Stormwater Management – 51% proactively reduce stormwater through green infrastructure²³

Cycling Trends

These activities are attractive as they require little equipment, or financial investment, to get started, and are open to participation to nearly all segments of the population. For these reasons, participation in these activities is often promoted as a means of spurring physical activity and increasing public health. The design of a community’s infrastructure is directly linked to physical activity – where environments are built with bicyclists and pedestrians in mind, more people bike and walk. Higher levels of bicycling and walking also coincide with increased bicycle and pedestrian safety and higher levels of physical activity. Increasing bicycling and walking in a community can have a major impact on improving public health and life expectancy.

National bicycling trends:

- There has been a gradual trend of increasing bicycling and walking to work for over 15+ years.
- Infrastructure to support biking communities is becoming more commonly funded in communities.
- Bike share systems, making bicycles available to the public for low-cost, short-term use, have been sweeping the nation since 2010. Twenty of the most populous U.S. cities have a functional bike share system.
- Bicycle touring is becoming a fast-growing trend around the world, including the United States and Canada. “Travelers are seeking out bike tours to stay active, minimize environmental impact, and experience diverse landscapes and cityscapes at a closer level.”²⁴

²² Laurie Harmon and Laurel Harrington, “Building a Community Garden in Your Park: Opportunities for Health, Community, and Recreation.” *National Recreation and Park Association*, https://www.nrpa.org/uploadedFiles/nrpa.org/Grants_and_Partners/Environmental_Conservation/Community-Garden-Handbook.pdf, accessed January 2019

²³ NRPA, “NRPA Report: Park and Recreation Sustainability Practices,” 2017. <https://www.nrpa.org/our-work/Three-Pillars/conservation/climate-resilient-parks/>

²⁴ Hope Nardini, “Bike Tourism a Rising Trend,” *Ethic Traveler*, <http://www.ethicaltraveler.org/2012/08/bike-tourism-a-rising-trend/>, accessed March 2021

- Urban bike tours, popular in cycle-friendly cities in Europe, are taking hold in the United States as well. Bikes and Hikes LA, an eco-friendly bike and hike sightseeing company founded in September 2014 offers visitors the opportunity to “see the city’s great outdoors while getting a good workout.” In New York, a hotel and a bike store are partnering to offer guests cruisers to explore the city during the summer of 2014.²⁵
- One of the newest trends in adventure cycling is “fat bike,” multiple speed bikes that are made to ride where other bikes cannot be ridden, with tires that are up to 5 inches wide run at low pressure for extra traction. Most fat bikes are used to ride on snow but they are also highly effective for riding on any loose surface like sand or mud. They also work well on most rough terrain or just riding through the woods. This bike offers unique opportunities to experience nature in ways that would not be possible otherwise.²⁶

Agencies around the country are working to proactively regulate E-Bikes on their trails and greenways. In September of 2019, land agencies – including the National Park Service, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Bureau of Land Management, and the Bureau of Reclamation – were ordered to allow E-bikes where other types of bicycles are allowed. According to this policy, E-bikes are no longer defined as motorized vehicles. Statewide, there are also regulations which should be considered at a local level in regard to allowing electrical assisted bicycles on bike paths, pedestrian paths and multi-purpose trails. Agencies such as Boulder County in Colorado are implementing pilot programs to test the potential of e-bikes on trails and the impact that they have to the environment, other trail users, and wildlife.²⁷ Electric Assist Bikes, or e-bikes, are becoming commonplace on both paved and non-paved surfaces. For commuters, this option allows for a quick, convenient, and environment-friendly method of transportation. Speeds vary based on the types of E-Bikes, which is typically broken down into two classes:

- Class 1 e-bikes provide electrical assistance only while the rider is pedaling. Electrical assistance stops when the bicycle reaches 20 mph.
- Class 2 e-bikes provide electrical assistance regardless if the rider is pedaling or not. Electrical assistance stops when the bicycle reaches 20 mph.

Dog Parks

Dog parks continue to see high popularity and have remained among the top planned addition to parks and recreational facilities over the past three years. They help build a sense of community and can draw potential new community members and tourists traveling with pets.²⁸

Recreation Management magazine²⁹ suggests that dog parks can represent a relatively low-cost way to provide an oft-visited a popular community amenity. Dog parks can be as simple as a gated area, or more elaborate with “designed-for-dogs” amenities like water fountains, agility equipment, and pet

²⁵ Michelle Baran, “New Trend: Urban Bike Tours in Los Angeles and New York,” *Budget Travel Blog*, <http://www.budgettravel.com/blog/new-trend-urban-bike-tours-in-los-angeles-and-new-york,11772/>, accessed March 2014

²⁶ Steven Pease, “Fat Bikes, How to Get the Most Out of Winter Cycling,” *Minnesota Cycling Examiner*, <http://www.examiner.com/article/fat-bikes-the-latest-trend-adventure-cycling>, February 1, 2014.

²⁷ “E-bikes on Open Space,” Boulder County, <https://www.bouldercounty.org/open-space/management/e-bikes/>, Accessed December 28, 2020

²⁸ Joe Bush, “Tour-Legged-Friendly Parks,” *Recreation Management*, February 2, 2016.

²⁹ Emily Tipping, “2014 State of the Industry Report, Trends in Parks and Recreation,” *Recreation Management*, June 2014.



wash stations, to name a few. Even “spraygrounds” are being designed just for dogs. Dog parks are also places for people to meet new friends and enjoy the outdoors.

The best dog parks cater to people with design features for their comfort and pleasure, but also with creative programming.³⁰ Amenities in an ideal dog park might include the following:

- Benches, shade and water – for dogs and people
- At least one acre of space with adequate drainage
- Double gated entry
- Ample waste stations well-stocked with bags
- Sandy beaches/sand bunker digging areas
- Custom designed splashpads for large and small dogs
- People-pleasing amenities such as walking trails, water fountains, restroom facilities, picnic tables, and dog wash stations.

Economic and Health Benefits of Parks

The Benefits of Parks: Why America Needs More City Parks and Open Space, a report from the Trust for Public Land, makes the following observations about the health, economic, environmental, and social benefits of parks and open space:³¹

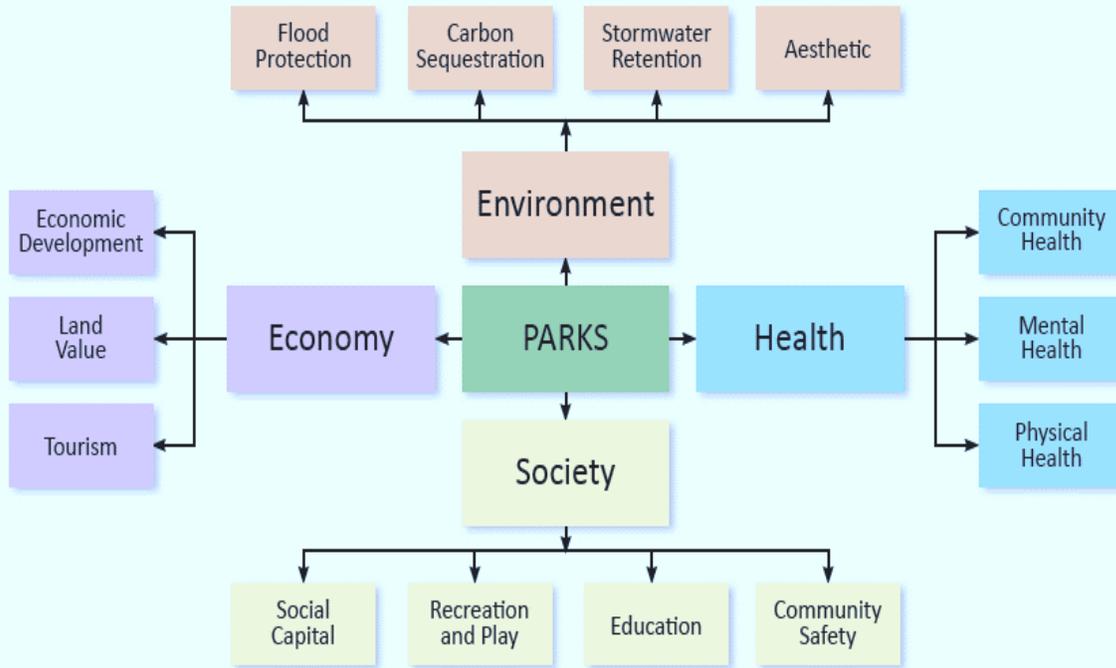
- Physical activity makes people healthier.
- Physical activity increases with access to parks.
- Contact with the natural world improves physical and psychological health.
- Residential and commercial property values increase.
- Value is added to community and economic development sustainability.
- Benefits of tourism are enhanced.
- Trees are effective in improving air quality and act as natural air conditioners.
- Trees assist with storm water control and erosion.
- Crime and juvenile delinquency are reduced.
- Recreational opportunities for all ages are provided.
- Stable neighborhoods and strong communities are created.

³⁰ Dawn Klingensmith “Gone to the Dogs: Design and Manage an Effective Off-Leash Area”, *Recreation Management*, March 2014. (http://recmanagement.com/feature_print.php?fid=201403fe02).

³¹ “Benefits of Parks White Paper.” The Trust for Public Land, 2018, www.tpl.org/benefits-parks-white-paper. Accessed 30 Sept. 2021.

Figure 21: Park System Benefits Provided to People and Communities

Park System Benefits provided to People



Source: *Earth Economics, 2011*

Farmers Market

Park and recreation agencies often have the role of connecting communities to local, fresh foods. In fact, many local agencies are the largest providers of federally funded meals for the public. One in five agencies manage a farmers market. There are many benefits in providing farmers markets in the community. Beyond providing fresh foods to the public and promoting agricultural and economic benefits for farmers and vendors, they also bring culture building and engagement on a consistent basis. According to a study by the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in 2019 of 296 agencies, approximately 67 percent of organizations host farmers markets once a week, with 21 percent offering it two or three times a week. Roughly four in five agencies use partnerships with nonprofits, farmers organizations, other local government departments, community development organizations, and the local extensions office to enhance the success of the farmers market.

Figure 22: Overview of NRPA Farmers Market Report



Source: 2019 NRPA Farmers Market Report

Food Trucks

It is estimated the food truck industry is a one-billion-dollar industry. In the US, over 32,000 businesses operated out of a food truck in 2021, employing more than 38,000 people. Popularity has increased since the late 2000's, but even more so from 2016 to 2021. This boom can be sourced back to the surge of gastronomy and new types of cuisine³². According to the 2015 Harvard Kennedy School Article "On the Go: Insights into Food Truck Regulation," the rise of food trucks placed a responsibility on city officials to regulate and enforce policies related to four primary areas: Economic Activity, Public Health, Public Safety, and Public Space¹.



Public space within many cities established a set of regulations that promote economic development by encouraging the use of vacant lots. These vacant lots are turning into "Food truck hubs," which help improve the aesthetics of the area and deter crime. Information and regulations are easily found online which facilitates the creation of new food truck businesses. Centralizing the permitting process for mobile food vendors also assists with getting new businesses on the road.

Generational Changes

Activity participation and preferences tend to vary based on several demographic factors but can also differ based on generational preferences. According to the Pew Research Center, the following birth years identify generations into the categories below.

Table 8: Generation by Age

<i>Silent Generation</i>	<i>1928 – 45</i>
<i>Baby Boomers</i>	<i>1946 – 64</i>
<i>Generation X</i>	<i>1965 - 80</i>
<i>Millennial</i>	<i>1981 – 96</i>
<i>Generation Z</i>	<i>1997 - 2016</i>
<i>Alpha Generation</i>	<i>2017-2024</i>

Source: Pew Research Center

The Silent Generation

The Silent Generation began life in some of the most difficult conditions, including the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, World War II and economic and political uncertainty. This generation is conservative, careful, and conscientious. The members of this generation also often are thrifty respectful, patriotic, loyal, and religious. This generation may be challenged by technology and the youngest have reached 75

³² "IBISWorld - Industry Market Research, Reports, and Statistics." Ibisworld.com, 2016, www.ibisworld.com/united-states/market-research-reports/food-trucks-industry/. Accessed 17 Dec. 2021.



years old and can be greatly assisted by the social interaction that takes place at senior centers or with senior programs.

Baby Boomers

As Baby Boomers enter and enjoy retirement, they are looking for opportunities in fitness, sports, outdoors, cultural events, and other activities that suit their lifestyles. With their varied life experiences, values, and expectations, Baby Boomers are predicted to redefine the meaning of recreation and leisure programming for mature adults. Boomers are second only to Generation X and Millennials in participation in fitness sports in 2019.³³

Boomers will look to park and recreation professionals to provide opportunities to enjoy many life-long hobbies and sports. When programming for this age group, a customized experience to cater to the need for self-fulfillment, healthy pleasure, nostalgic youthfulness, and individual escapes are important. Recreation trends are shifting from games and activities that boomers associate with senior citizens. Activities such as bingo, bridge, and shuffleboard will likely be avoided because boomers relate these activities with old age.

Generation X

Many members of Generation X are in the peak of their careers, raising families, and growing their connections within the community. As suggested by the *2017 Participation Report* from the Physical Activity Council, members of Generation X were “all or nothing” in terms of their levels of physical activity; with 37 percent reported as highly active, and 27 percent reported as completely inactive. As further noted in the Report, over 50 percent of Generation X was likely to have participated in fitness and outdoor sports activities. An additional 37 percent participated in individual sports.

The Millennial Generation

The Millennial Generation is generally considered those born between about 1981 and 1996, and in April 2016, the Pew Research Center reported that this generation had surpassed the Baby Boomers as the nation’s most populous age group.³⁴

As Millennials tend to be more tech-savvy, socially conscious, achievement-driven age group with more flexible ideas about balancing wealth, work and play. They generally prefer different park amenities, and recreational programs, as opposed to their counterparts in the Baby Boomer generation. Engagement with this generation should be considered in parks and recreation planning. In an April 2015 posting to the National Parks and Recreation Association’s official blog, *Open Space*, Scott Hornick, CEO of Adventure Solutions suggests the following 7 considerations to make your parks Millennial friendly³⁵:

1. Group activities are appealing.
2. Wireless internet/Wi-Fi access is necessary – being connected digitally is a millennial status-quo and sharing experiences in real time is something Millennials enjoying doing.
3. Having many different experiences is important – Millennials tend to participate in a broad range of activities.
4. Convenience and comfort are sought out.

³³Physical Activity Council, Participation Report, 2019: <http://www.physicalactivitycouncil.com/pdfs/current.pdf>

³⁴ Richard Fry, “Millennials overtake Baby Boomers as America’s Largest Generation”, *Pew Research Center Fact Tank*, April 25, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/04/25/millennials-overtake-baby-boomers/>, accessed May 2015

³⁵ Scott Hornick, “7 Ways to Make Your Park More Millennial Friendly”, *Parks and Recreation Open Space Blog*, August 19, 2015, <http://www.nrpa.org/blog/7-ways-to-make-your-parks-millennial-friendly>, accessed May 2016

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5. Competition is important, and Millennials enjoy winning, recognition, and earning rewards.
 6. Facilities that promote physical activity, such as trails and sports fields, and activities like adventure races are appealing.
 7. Many Millennials own dogs and want places they can recreate with them.

In addition to being health conscious, Millennials often look for local and relatively inexpensive ways to experience the outdoors close to home; on trails, bike paths, and in community parks.³⁶

Generation Z

As of the 2010 Census, the age group under age 18 forms about a quarter of the U.S. population. Nationwide, nearly half of the youth population is ethnically diverse, and 25 percent is Hispanic. Characteristics cited for Generation Z, the youth of today, include³⁷:

1. The most obvious characteristic for Generation Z is the widespread use of technology.
2. Generation Z members live their lives online and they love sharing both the intimate and mundane details of life.
3. They tend to be acutely aware that they live in a pluralistic society and tend to embrace diversity.
4. Generation Z tend to be independent. They do not wait for their parents to teach them things or tell them how to make decisions, they Google it.

Generation Alpha

Children born in this generation are children of Millennials which will be born entirely in the 21st century and considered the most technological demographic to date. Also known as iGeneration, they will grow up in a world that interacts with artificial intelligence and smart voice assistance in a completely natural way – not able to understand a world without such technology. By the time this generation reaches their twenties, they are likely to recreate the way they interact with their environments. They will have little to no fear of technology. Artificial Intelligence, which is expected to be mainstream by the time the first Alphas reach their twenties would be expected to have significantly more leisure time than any other generation to date. Near the end of the planning horizon for this master plan, the Alpha generation will be reaching teen years. Every effort to accommodate this generation with high quality, state of the art technology in facilities and with programs will be necessary to reach this group.

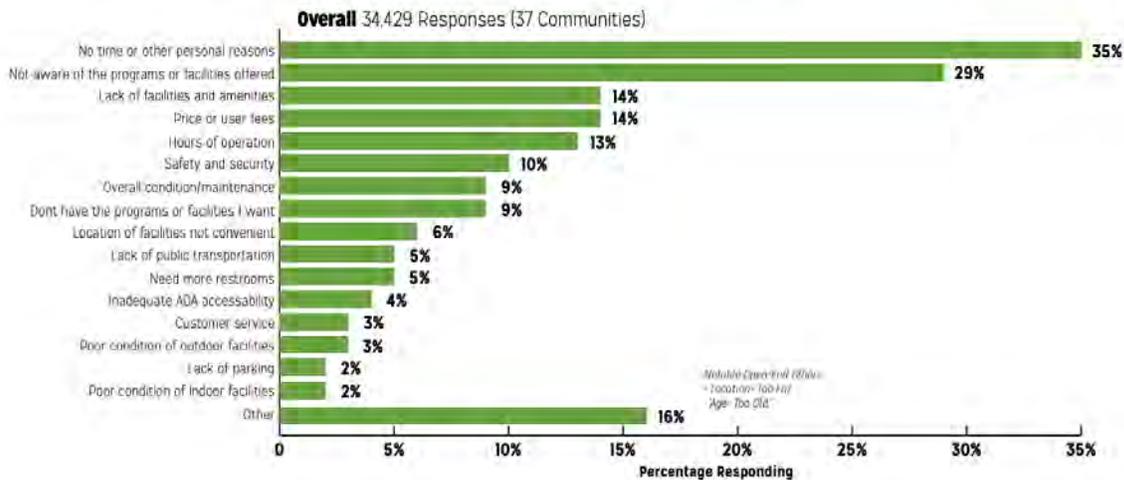
Marketing and Social Media

Awareness of parks and recreation services is critical to the success of any agency. According to a study in collaboration with the National Recreation and Park Association and GP RED of approximately 35,000 responses, one of the primary reasons that patrons do not participate in programs and services is due to lack of awareness.

³⁶ “Sneakernomics: How The ‘Outdoor’ Industry Became The ‘Outside’ Industry”, *Forbes*, September 21, 2015, <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mattpowell/2015/09/21/sneakernomics-how-the-outdoor-industry-became-the-outside-industry/2/#50958385e34d>, accessed May 2016

³⁷ Alexandra Levit, “Make Way for Generation Z”, *New York Times*, March 28, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/03/29/jobs/make-way-for-generation-z.html>, accessed May 2016

Figure 23: Common Reasons for non-use of Recreation Participation



Source: NRPA Park Awareness Summary Report

In today’s modern world, there is many opportunities to promote and market parks and recreation services. It begins with a needs assessment that details how the community prefers to receive information. Then, a marketing plan should be developed that is catered to the agency’s resources, including staff, time, and budget. This should guide the agency for one to three years.

Technology has made it easier to reach a wide-reaching, location-dependent audience that can be segmented by demographics. However, it has also caused a gap in the way parks and recreation agencies are able to communicate. Agencies around the country have previously not dedicated substantial funding to marketing, however it is becoming a critical piece to receiving participants. Without dedicated staff and support, it is difficult to keep up with social media trends which seem to change daily. Furthermore, with an overarching desire to standardize a county’s brand, there may be limitations to the access and control that a parks and recreation agency has over their marketing. It is essential that professionals become advocates for additional resources, training, and education. Having a strong presence on social networks, through email marketing, and through traditional marketing will help enhance the perception from the community.³⁸

Older Adults and Senior Programming

Many older adults and seniors are choosing to maintain active lifestyles and recognize the health benefits of regular physical activities. With the substantial number of adults in these age cohorts, many communities have found a need to offer more programming, activities, and facilities that support the active lifestyle this generation desires.

³⁸ “The NRPA Park and Recreation Marketing and Communications Report | Research | Parks and Recreation Magazine | NRPA.” Nrupa.org, 2015, www.nrupa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2020/january/the-nrpa-park-and-recreation-marketing-and-communications-report/. Accessed 16 Nov. 2021.



Public parks and recreation agencies are increasingly expected to be significant providers of such services and facilities. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) developed the Healthy Aging in Parks initiative to support parks and recreation agencies in serving older adults in the community. This initiative is based on the needs of older adults, including physical fitness, socialization, transportation, and other quality of life desires. Some of the primary strategies of the Healthy Aging in Parks initiative are as follows:

- Promote participation in physical activity through providing social engagement
- Provide safe environments – both inside and outside – that limit barriers for participation
- Utilize evidence-based interventions to increase support and manage chronic diseases¹

Park and Recreation agencies can assist the aging demographic in staying healthy through providing programs and facilities. According to an NRPA survey, nine in ten local Park and Recreation agencies offer services for older adults. Surveys reveal that agencies are most likely to the following services:

- Exercise classes (91%)
- Field trips, tours, vacations (70%)
- Arts and crafts classes (67%)
- Opportunities to volunteer in recreation centers (58%)
- Special events and festivals (58%)
- Group walks (53%)
- Opportunities to volunteer in parks (48%)
- Paid job opportunities to lead exercise classes, work in recreation centers or at parks (47%)

For underserved older adults, parks and recreation agencies can be a critical resource, providing low-cost meals, low-cost or free fitness programs, and transportation services. However, many organizations are faced with barriers that inhibit the ability to offer these programs, with the top responses being facility space shortage (58%) and inadequate funding (50%). To overcome these obstacles, agencies will often develop relationships with partners in the community who may specialize in serving the older adults. Some of the primary partners include:

- Area agencies on aging (58%)
- Retirement communities (44%)
- Senior meals providers (42%)
- Hospitals and doctors' offices (39%)
- Local health departments (39%)
- Health insurance companies (38%)
- Community-based organizations (faith based, YMCAs, etc.) (38%)

Outdoor Fitness Trails

A popular trend in urban parks for health, wellness, and fitness activities is to install outdoor fitness equipment along trails. The intent of the outdoor equipment is to provide an accessible form of exercise for all community members, focusing on strength, balance, flexibility, and cardio exercise. These fitness stations – also known as “outdoor gyms” -- are generally meant for adults but can be grouped together near a playground or kid-friendly amenity so that adults can exercise and socialize while supervising their children. The fitness equipment can also be dispersed along a nature trail or walking path to provide a unique experience to exercise in nature. Educational and safety signage should be placed next to equipment to guide the user in understanding and utilizing the outdoor gyms.



Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation has become a thriving economic driver, creating 4.3 million direct national jobs in 2020 and generated \$689 billion in consumer spending. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimated that the outdoor recreation economy makes up 1.8% of the current gross domestic product

(GDP) in 2020, accounting for more than \$374.3 billion. The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the outdoor recreation industry. Although the full extent of that impact is not known yet, one of the primary data points is around outdoor recreation employment, which decreased in all fifty states in 2020. The top three conventional outdoor recreation activities according to the BEA in 2020 was boating/fishing, RVing, and hunting/shooting/trapping.³⁹

In the State of Maryland, the outdoor recreation economy generates:



Pickleball

Pickleball continues to be a fast-growing sport throughout America. Considered a mix between tennis, ping pong, and badminton, the sport initially grew in popularity with older adults but is now expanding to other age groups. According to the American Council on Exercise (ACE), regular participation in Pickleball satisfied daily exercise intensity guidelines for cardio fitness for middle-aged and older adults.⁴⁰ The sport can be temporarily played on existing indoor or outdoor tennis courts with removable equipment and taped or painted lining. This lining, if painted on tennis surfaces, may interfere with requirements for competitive tennis programs or tournaments. Agencies will need to look at their community’s tennis and pickleball participation to determine the benefits and costs of constructing new pickleball courts versus utilizing existing tennis ball courts. Best practices regarding pickleball setup and programming can be found on usapa.com, the official website for the United States Pickleball Association.

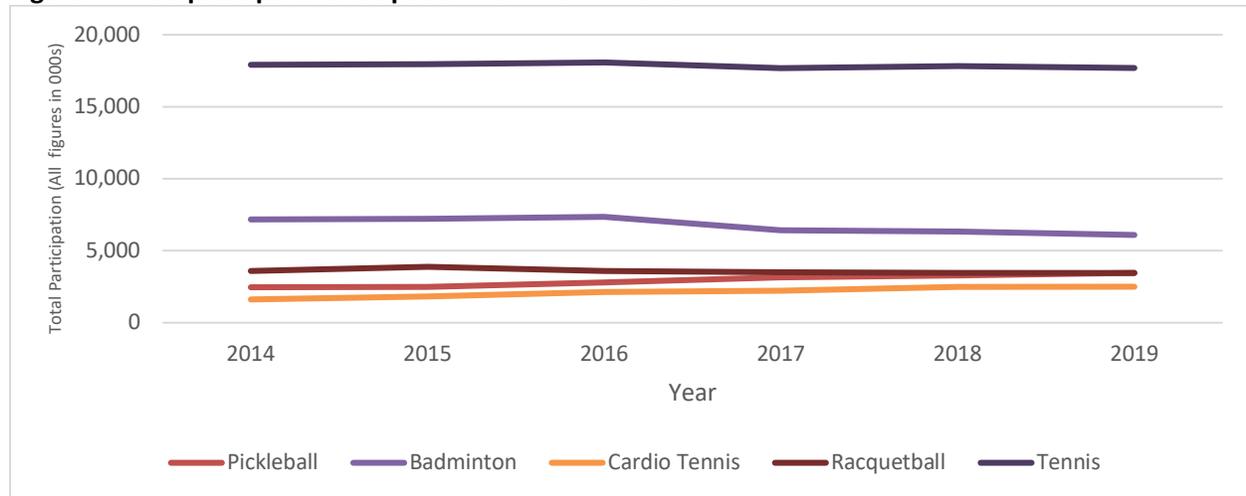
According to the 2020 SFIA Topline Report, over the past five years, from 2014 to 2019, total participation in Pickleball increased 7.1 percent on average each year. From 2018 to 2019, the sport grew 4.8 percent. Out of the most common racquet sports, pickleball and cardio tennis are the only

³⁹ “Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account, U.S. And States, 2020 | U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA).” Bea.gov, 2020, www.bea.gov/news/2021/outdoor-recreation-satellite-account-us-and-states-2020. Accessed 16 Nov. 2021.

⁴⁰ Green, Daniel, August 2018. “ACE-Sponsored Research: Can Pickleball Help Middle-aged and Older Adults Get Fit?” American Council on Exercise. Accessed 2020. <https://www.acefitness.org/education-and-resources/professional/certified/august-2018/7053/ace-sponsored-research-can-pickleball-help-middle-aged-and-older-adults-get-fit/>

sports that have seen positive growth on average over the past five years. Tennis is still the most popular racquet sport by far, although participation growth has slowed over the past five years.⁴¹

Figure 24: Racquet Sport Participation from 2014 - 2019



Source: 2020 SFIA Topline Report

Riparian and Watershed Best Practices

The ability to detect trends and monitor attributes in watershed and/or riparian areas allows planners opportunities to evaluate the effectiveness of their management plan. By monitoring their own trends, Planners can also identify changes in resource conditions that are the result of pressures beyond their control. Trend detection requires a commitment to long-term monitoring of riparian areas and vegetation attributes.

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) suggests the following steps to building an effective watershed management plan. See water.epa.gov⁴² for more information from the EPA.

- Build partnerships
- Characterize the watershed
- Set goals and identify solutions
- Design and implementation program
- Implement the watershed plan
- Measure progress and make adjustments

Signage and Wayfinding

To increase perception and advocacy, a parks and recreation professional needs to prioritize opportunities that impact the way the community *experiences the system*. This can start with signage, wayfinding, and park identity. The importance of signage, wayfinding, and park identity to encourage awareness of locations and amenities cannot be understated. A park system impacts the widest range of users in a community; reaching users, and non-users, across all demographic, psychographic, behavioral,

⁴¹ "SFIA Sports, Fitness and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report" February 2020. Sports & Fitness Industry Association. Accessed 2020.

⁴² "Implement the Watershed Plan – Implement Management Strategies," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <http://water.epa.gov/type/watersheds/datait/watershedcentral/plan2.cfm>



and geographic markets. In a more narrow focus, the park system is the core service an agency can use to provide value to its community (ex. partnerships between departments or commercial/residential development, high-quality and safe experiences for users, inviting community landscaping contributing to the overall look or image of the community). Signage, wayfinding, and park identity can be the first step in continued engagement by the community, and a higher perception or awareness of a park system; which can lead to an increase in health outcomes.

Sports Trends

The 2020 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report details the changes in fitness, team, and individual sports over the last decade. Fitness activities – such as aquatic exercise, impact/intensity training, rowing machines, stationary cycling, swimming for fitness, yoga, etc. – are the most participated activity – and have been for the past five years. For the first time since 2016, team sports increased in participation. An increase in basketball (the most played team sport) and outdoor soccer (the third most played team sport) has helped fuel this growth. Overall, team sports have over 29 million youth participants. BMX biking is one of the fastest growing extreme sports, gaining 10 percent participation in 2019, followed by skateboarding (increase of 7%).⁴³

Synthetic Turf

Demand for fields have risen with the popularity of youth and adult sports. Synthetic turf can solve many challenges and parks and recreation departments because they can withstand the constant use from players. They require less maintenance and are not easily damaged in wet weather conditions. Synthetic turf requires periodic maintenance which includes brushing the turf to stand up the fibers which allows it to wear better, the addition of infill in high traffic areas (soccer goals, corner kicks, etc.) and an annual deep cleaning. However, synthetic turf costs significantly more upfront, and they require replacement about every ten years. This can have a large environmental and economic footprint unless the products can be recycled, reused, or composted.

Safety concerns primarily stem the chemicals found in crumb rubber. For the last 20 years, crumb rubber has been the common choice for fields. It often has distinct plastic smell, and can leach chemicals, like zinc, into downstream waters. There are also concerns about off-gassing of crumb rubber and the potential health impacts of this material. Fortunately, advances in technology have allowed for new innovative products to be developed without crumb rubber. New innovations have allowed more sustainable and safer synthetic turf to be used by athletes and remove the negative perception. In the future, shock pads may become commonplace – this is the layer under the turf that can absorb an impact and reduce the chance of a concussion. The incorporation of non-rubber infills will continue to grow.

⁴³ “2020 Sports, Fitness, and Leisure Activities Topline Participation Report.” *Sfia.org*, 2020, www.sfia.org/reports/802_2020-Sports%2C-Fitness%2C-and-Leisure-Activities-Topline-Participation-Report. Accessed 1 Nov. 2021.

Technology Trends

Administrative

Technology has moved at a rapid pace in the 21st century, impacting all areas of business operations. It has required agencies to consider effective ways of incorporating technology into the everyday workflow. There are several questions that can empower agencies to keep up with administrative trends and become an agent of change:⁴⁴

1. How will your agency innovate and adapt? Consider developing a digital transformation strategy to keep up with technology trends.
2. What information from your facilities, programs, and services can be collected and utilized for decision making? This data can assist with anticipating the needs of your community.
3. How can you educate yourself and your team to have more knowledge and skills as technology evolves? Continuous education for both personal and professional development can level up your agency.
4. In what ways can your operations be streamlined? Develop a list of processes that could be improved through new systems.
5. How can you help your staff to see the value in technology? Be a leader that embraces change.
6. How can your agency increase your online presence? A marketing plan should be used to enhance public perception and increase participation in programs and services.

Parks

Technology can be integrated into the design of parks. The SMART Parks Toolkit, developed by UCLA Luskin, provides in-depth tactical strategies for achieving equitable access, energy efficiencies, and effective operations. A full list of technologies can be found in the guide, but a shortened list to provide a high-level overview is below.⁴⁵

Table 9: Emerging Technologies in Parks

Category	Technology
Landscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Automatic lawn mowers• Near-infrared photography• Green roofs• Green walls• Air-pruning plant containers• Vibrating pollinators
Irrigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Smart water controllers• Low-pressure and rotating sprinklers• Subsurface drip irrigation• Smart water metering• Graywater recycling
Stormwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engineered soils• Underground storage basins

⁴⁴ "The Digital Transformation of Parks and Rec | Community Center | Parks and Recreation Magazine | NRPA." *Nrpa.org*, 2015, www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/february/the-digital-transformation-of-parks-and-rec/. Accessed 30 Nov. 2021.

⁴⁵ "SMART Parks Toolkit Receives National Award - UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation." *UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation*, 4 Apr. 2019, innovation.luskin.ucla.edu/2019/04/04/smart-parks-toolkit-receives-national-planning-award/. Accessed 30 Nov. 2021.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drones • Rainwater harvesting
Hardscape	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-laminated timber • Pervious paving • Piezoelectric energy-harvesting tiles • Self-healing concrete • Photocatalytic titanium dioxide coating • Transparent concrete • Daylight fluorescent aggregate • Carbon upcycled concrete
Activity Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interactive play structures • High-performance track surfaces • Pool ozonation • Energy-generating exercise equipment • Outdoor DJ booths • Hard-surfacing testing equipment
Urban Furniture and Amenities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smart Benches • Solar Shade structures • Solar powered trash compactors • Restroom occupancy sensors • Smart water fountains • Digital signs • Automatic bicycle and pedestrian counters
Lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motion-activated sensors • LEDs and fiber optics as art • Off-grid light fixtures • Digital additions to LED fixtures • Lighting shields
Digiscapes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wi-Fi • Geographic Information Systems (GIS) • Application Software (Apps) • Sensor Networks and the Internet of Things

Source: SMART Parks Toolkit, UCLA Luskin



Marketing

Digital marketing trends are changing rapidly, and many parks and recreation agencies may struggle to understand how to incorporate these new strategies. Agencies should define their target market – or the specific group of people whom the agency wants to offer their programs and services. Fully understanding the needs and desires of their target market will provide valuable insight to improve an agencies marketing efforts.

In addition, consider the following platforms and how to best implement some of the following trends:

- **Brand:** A brand should be reflective of the “personality” of the agency. A brand strategy can help tie together all elements of an agency that are visible to the public, including uniforms, signage, website graphics, and social media.
- **Social Media:** An agency’s social media accounts should inform and entertain, but the primary purpose should be as an engagement tool. Effective social media strategies incorporate interaction with their audience and show an “behind-the-scenes” look at an agency’s operations. Instagram stories, twitter polls, and live videos on Facebook are all examples of interactive content designed to engage an audience. Influencer marketing – which relies on partnerships with well-known social media accounts - provides additional opportunities for agencies to extend their reach beyond their typical audience.
- **Website:** An agencies website should be mobile-friendly, utilize best practices for search engine optimization (SEO), and be oriented to reach an agency’s conversion goals. Conversion goals are objectives that an agency sets based on an action that they want visitors to take. Common conversion goals for parks and recreation agencies might include program registrations, membership sign-ups, or downloads of online recreation guides. An agency should set goals based on their overall operations’ objectives.
- **Application Software:** Many agencies develop apps (either in-house or through a third-party developer) that is entirely accessible from mobile devices. The purpose of these varies, but they can be used for residents to report maintenance issues, create interactive activities through Augmented Reality (AR), or find parks through online Geographic Information Systems (GIS). Agencies need to consider the upfront and ongoing resources that it takes to develop and maintain this type of system.

Teen Programs

Local parks and recreation agencies are often tasked with finding opportunities for teen programming beyond youth sports. Beyond interacting with those of their own age, many agencies are developing creative multi-generational activities which may involve seniors and teens assisting one another to learn life skills. Activities such as meditation, yoga, sports, art, and civic engagement can help teens develop life skills and engage cognitive functions. Agencies that can help teens develop career development skills and continue their education are most successful in promoting positive teen outcomes and curbing at-risk behavior. ⁴⁶ As suicide is the second highest causes of deaths among United States teens, mental health continues to be a priority for this age group.

⁴⁶ Kardys, Jack “Park Afterschool Programs: A Vital Community Resource” National Recreation and Park Association. June 2019, <https://www.nrpa.org/parks-recreation-magazine/2019/june/park-afterschool-programs-a-vital-community-resource/>



Therapeutic Recreation

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) established that persons with disabilities have the right to the same access to parks and recreation facilities and programming as those without disabilities. The National Council on Disability (NCD) issued a comprehensive report, *Livable Communities for Adults with Disabilities*.⁴⁷ This report identified six elements for improving the quality of life for all citizens, including children, youth, and adults with disabilities. The six elements are:

- Provide affordable, appropriate, accessible housing
- Ensure accessible, affordable, reliable, safe transportation
- Adjust the physical environment for inclusiveness and accessibility
- Provide work, volunteer, and education opportunities
- Ensure access to key health and support services
- Encourage participation in civic, cultural, social, and recreational activities

Therapeutic Services bring two forms of services for persons with disabilities into play, specific programming and inclusion services. Individuals with disabilities need not only functional skills but to have physical and social environments in the community that are receptive to them and accommodating individual needs. Inclusion allows individuals to determine their own interests and follow them. Many park and recreation departments around the country are offering specific programming for people with disabilities, but not as many offer inclusion services. In “Play for All—Therapeutic Recreation Embraces All Abilities,” an article in *Recreation Management* magazine⁴⁸, Dana Carman described resources for communities looking to expand their therapeutic recreation services.

Therapeutic recreation includes a renewed focus on serving people with the social/emotional challenges associated with “invisible disabilities” such as ADHD, bipolar disorders, spectrum disorders and sensory integration disorders. A growing number of park and recreation departments are making services for those with invisible disabilities a successful part of their programming as well. When well done, these same strategies improve the recreation experience for everyone.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ National Council on Disability, *Livable Communities for Adults with Disabilities*, December 2004, <http://www.ncd.gov/publications/2004/12022004>.

⁴⁸ *Recreation Management*, February 2007, <http://recmanagement.com/200710fe03.php>, accessed on February 25, 2015.

⁴⁹ Kelli Anderson, “A Welcome Inclusion”, *Recreation Management*, October 2010, <http://recmanagement.com/201010fe03.php>, accessed on February 26, 2015.



Trails and Health

Studies have shown that there is a direct correlation between how close people live to a connected system of trails and their level of physical activity in a community. Trails can provide a wide variety of opportunities for being physically active, such as walking/running/hiking, rollerblading, wheelchair recreation, bicycling, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing, fishing, hunting, and horseback riding. Active use of trails results in positive health outcomes and is an excellent way to encourage people to adopt healthy lifestyle changes. In a study released in 2014, results indicate that there were benefits for those that lived up to 2.5 miles away from a biking or walking infrastructure, and for those that lived within one mile, they were getting on average 45 minutes more exercise per week.

The American Heart Association has found that for every \$1 spent on building trails, \$3 is saved medical costs. The health benefits are equally as high for trails in urban neighborhoods as for those in state or national parks. Data from the American Trails Association indicates that all trail use is beneficial for physical health.⁵⁰ A trail in the neighborhood, creating a “linear park,” makes it easier for people to incorporate exercise into their daily routines, whether for recreation or non-motorized transportation. Urban trails need to connect people to places they want to go, such as schools, transit centers, businesses, and neighborhoods.

Urban Park Revenue

Comprehensive and national studies continue to demonstrate the economic value of parks and recreation systems. The website ConservationTools.org has tools and research to make the case for conservation, including reports on the economic benefits of open space, wetlands, trails, water quality, outdoors, and more. According to a number of studies from market research firms, the Trust for Public Land, Active Living Research, the American Planning Association, among others, the primary key economic value of city park systems are detailed in the Figure below.⁵¹

⁵⁰ “Health Benefits of Trails - American Trails.” Americantrails.org, 2014, www.americantrails.org/healthbenefits. Accessed 1 Nov. 2021.

⁵¹ “Economic Benefits of Parks : ConservationTools.” Conservationtools.org, 2021, conservationtools.org/guides/98-economic-benefits-of-parks. Accessed 30 Nov. 2021.



Figure 25: The Seven Economic Benefits of Parks





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Priorities & Goals for the Next Five Years

A-1: State Goals for Parks and Recreation

- Make a variety of quality recreational environments and opportunities readily accessible to all of its citizens and thereby contribute to their physical and mental well-being.
- Recognize and strategically use parks and recreation facilities as amenities to make communities, counties and the State more desirable places to live, work, play and visit.
- Use state investment in parks, recreation and open space to complement and mutually support the broader goals and objectives of local comprehensive / master plans.
- To the greatest degree feasible, ensure that recreational land and facilities for local populations are conveniently located relative to population centers, are accessible without reliance on the automobile and help to protect natural open spaces and resources.
- Complement infrastructure and other public investments and priorities in existing communities and areas planned for growth through investment in neighborhood and community parks and facilities.
- Continue to protect recreational open space and resource lands at a rate that equals or exceeds the rate that land is developed at a statewide level.

A-2: State Goals for Natural Resource Land Conservation

- Identify, protect and restore lands and waterways in Maryland that support important aquatic and terrestrial natural resources and ecological functions, through combined use of the following techniques:
 - Public land acquisition and stewardship;
 - Private land conservation easements and stewardship practices through purchased or donated easement programs;
 - Local land use management plans and procedures that conserve natural resources and environmentally sensitive areas and minimize impacts to resource lands when development occurs;
 - Incentives for resource-based economies that increase the retention of forests, wetlands or agricultural lands;
 - Avoidance of impacts on natural resources by publicly funded infrastructure development projects; and
 - Appropriate mitigation response, commensurate with the value of the affected resource.
- Focus conservation and restoration activities on priority areas, according to a strategic framework such as the Targeted Ecological Areas (TEAs) in GreenPrint (which is not to be confused with the former easement program also called GreenPrint).



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Alternative Funding Opportunities

Potential Funding Support

BerryDunn guided Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism staff through a potential funding source exercise that identified the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism most likely funding sources.

Potential Funding Sources and Strategies

BerryDunn has compiled the following list of potential funding sources and strategies for public parks and recreation identified through over 22 years of consulting with agencies across the United States. They are provided for agencies to review for potential use in their own communities. The following strategies were identified as the most potential options for Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks, and Tourism for new or expanded revenue and cost savings strategies and maximizing efforts to meet the needs of the community. Eighty-four (84) new potential funding opportunities were identified as something the Charles County Department of Recreation, Parks and Tourism could definitely or possibly consider in the future.

Traditional Parks and Recreation Operations and Capital Development Funding Sources

There are a variety of mechanisms that local governments can employ to provide services and to make public improvements. Parks and recreation operating, and capital development funding typically comes from conventional sources such as sales, use, and property tax referenda voted upon by the community, along with developer exactions. Operating funds are typically capped by legislation; may fluctuate based on the economy, public spending, or assessed valuation; and may not always keep up with inflationary factors. In the case of capital development, “borrowed funds” sunset with the completion of loan repayment and are not available to carry-over or re-invest without voter approval. Explained below are the salient points of traditional funding sources. Many of these strategies may be currently in use to some extent by your agency.

Traditional Tax and Exactions-Based Funding Resources

General or Operating Fund (In Use)

Parks and recreation services are typically funded by an agency’s General or Operating Fund, which can be comprised of property tax, sales tax, and other compulsory charges levied by a government for the purpose of financing services performed for the common benefit of a community. These funds may also come from resources such as inter-governmental agreements, reimbursements, and interest and may include such revenue sources as franchise taxes, licenses and permits, fees, transfers in, reserves, interest income, and miscellaneous other incomes.

Property Tax (Possibly Consider)

Property tax revenue often funds park and recreation special districts and may be used as a dedicated source for capital development. When used for operation funding, it often makes the argument for charging resident and non-resident fee differentials.



Traditional Parks and Recreation Earned Revenue Resources

Fees and Charges

Daily Admission and Annual Pass Sales or Vehicle Permits (In Use)

Daily and annual pass fees can apply to regional parks and aquatics centers. The consultant team recommends consideration of bulk discount buying of daily admission fees marketed as “monthly, seasonal, 3-month, 6-month, and/or annual passes.”

Registration Fees (In Use)

This revenue source is for participating in programs, classes, activities, and events which typically require pre-registration to ensure a place. These services may or may not have limited space. These participant fees attempt to recover most if not all of the direct expenses and are often revenue positive due to market demand.

Ticket Sales/Admissions (In Use)

This revenue source is for accessing facilities for self-directed or spectator activities such as splash parks, ballparks, and entertainment activities. Fees may also be assessed for tours, entrance or gate admission, and other activities, which may or may not be self-directed. These user fees help offset operational costs or apply to new projects.

Alternative Parks and Recreation Operations and Capital Development Funding Sources

Alternative funding sources include a variety of different or non-conventional public sector strategies for diversifying the funding base beyond traditional tax-based support. The following is a list of known industry funding practices, potential sources, and strategies, as compiled by BerryDunn. Some of the strategies may currently be used by your agency but may not be used to maximum effectiveness or capacity. Those that may not currently be used by your agency should be considered for a projects or the operation’s specific relevance.

NOTE: *Not every funding mechanism on this list may be allowable by law, as the laws, regulations, statutes, ordinances, and systems of governance vary from city to city, county to county, and state to state. The authority to put forth referenda or institute exactions must be researched for validity within your city and your state, as this list is comprised of the financial practices from across the nation. Some referenda are passed by simple majority of those who vote, while others require a larger percentage to pass. In certain circumstances, referenda are passed by the majority of eligible voters versus just those who vote.*



Loan Mechanisms

General Obligation Bonds (In Use)

Bonded indebtedness issued with the approval of the electorate for capital improvements and general public improvements.

Alternative Service Delivery and Funding Structures

Your agency may already be using some of these strategies.

Inter-local Agreements (In Use)

Contractual relationships could be established between two or more local units of government and/or between a local unit of government and a non-profit organization for the joint usage/development of sports fields, regional parks, or other facilities.

Privatization – Outsourcing the Management (In Use)

Typically used for food and beverage management, golf course operations, ball field, or sports complex operations by negotiated or bid contract.

Partnership Opportunities

Partnerships are joint development funding sources or operational funding sources between two separate agencies, such as two government entities, a non-profit and a government agency, or a private business and a government agency. Two partners jointly develop revenue producing park and recreation facilities and share risk, operational costs, responsibilities, and asset management based on the strengths and weaknesses of each partner.

Creating synergy based on expanded program offerings and collaborative efforts can be beneficial to all providers as interest grows and people gravitate to the type of facility and programs that best suit their recreational needs and schedules. Potential strategic alliance partnerships where missions run parallel, and mutually beneficial relationships can be fostered and may include the following:

- YMCA (Possibly Consider)
- School Districts (In Use)
- Medical Centers or Hospitals (Definitely Consider)
- Boys and Girls Club (Possibly Consider)
- Kiwanis, Optimists, VFWs, Elks, Rotary, and other service and civic organizations (Possibly Consider)
- Chamber of Commerce (Possibly Consider)
- Convention and Visitor 's Bureau (Possibly Consider)
- Homeowner or Neighborhood Associations (Possibly Consider)
- Youth Sports Associations (In Use)
- Adult Sports Associations (In Use)
- Neighboring counties/communities (Possibly Consider)
- Private alternative providers (Possibly Consider)
- Churches (Possibly Consider)
- Professional Sports Teams/Organizations (Possibly Consider)
- Amusement Parks (example Disney World) (Possibly Consider)
- Senior Citizen Groups (AARP, Silver Sneakers) (Possibly Consider)

A Sample Partnership Policy can be provided to your agency.



Community Resources

The following subsections summarize research findings on potential funding sources that could enhance capital expenditures for capital repair, renovation, and new construction and operating budgets for an agency. These findings do not recommend any particular funding strategy over another. The economic conditions within the service area may vary with time, and your agency should explore the best means of achieving its goals toward the operations of the agency, the programs, and the facilities on an ongoing basis.

Advertising Sales (Possibly Consider)

Advertising sales are a viable opportunity for revenue through the sale of tasteful and appropriate advertising on items such as program guides, scoreboards, dasher boards, and other visible products or services. This could be a viable strategy in the future if appropriate opportunities present themselves, such as the acquisition of scoreboards, etc. Current sign codes should be reviewed for conflicts or appropriate revisions.

Corporate Sponsorships (Possibly Consider)

An agency can solicit this revenue-funding source itself or work with agencies that pursue and use this type of funding. Sponsorships are often used for programs and events where there are greater opportunities for sponsor recognition (greater value to the sponsor).

A Sample Sponsorship Policy can be provided to your agency.

Fundraising (Possibly Consider)

Many park and recreation agencies have special fundraisers on an annual basis to help cover specific programs and capital projects. This can include selling bricks, benches, pavers, tiles, and commemorative tree plantings, etc.

Crowdfunding (Possibly Consider)

Crowdfunding is the practice of funding a project or venture by raising many small amounts of money from a large number of people, typically via the Internet. Park and Recreation agencies are beginning to incorporate crowdfunding efforts alongside traditional fundraising strategies. NRPA has implemented a Fund Your Park crowdfunding platform. It's free to members, donations are tax deductible and you have all the support you need from NRPA staff. *Source: Kara Kish, MPA, CPRE, CPSI, article in Parks and Recreation Magazine, December 2015. www.NRPA.org*

Grants (In Use)

Grants often supplement or match funds that have already been received. For example, grants can be used for program purposes, information technology infrastructure, planning, design, seed money, and construction. Due to their infrequent nature, grants are often used to fund a specific venture and should not be viewed as a continuous source of funding.

Facilities and Equipment Grants (Possibly Consider)

These grants help buy long-lasting physical assets, such as a building. The applicant organization must make the case that the new acquisition will help better serve its Clients. Fund providers considering these requests will not only be interested in the applicant's current activities and financial health, but they will also inquire as to the financial and program plans for the next several years. Fund providers do not want allocate resources to an organization or program only to see it shut down in a few years because of poor management.



General Purpose or Operating Grants (Possibly Consider)

When a grant maker gives an operating grant, it can be used to support the general expenses of operating. An operating grant means the fund provider supports the overall mission and trusts that the money will be put to good use. Operating grants are generally much harder to procure than program or support grants.

Management or Technical Assistance Grants (Possibly Consider)

Unlike most project grants, a technical assistance grant does not directly support the mission-related activities of an agency. Instead, they support management or administration and the associated fundraising, marketing, and financial management needs.

Program-Related Investments (PRIs) (Possibly Consider)

In addition to grants, the Internal Revenue Service allows foundations to make loans—called Program-Related Investments (PRIs)—to nonprofits. PRIs must be for projects that would be eligible for grant support. They are usually made at low or zero interest. PRIs must be paid back to the grant maker. PRIs are often made to organizations involved in building projects.

Matching Grants (Definitely Consider)

Many grant makers will provide funding only on the condition that an amount equal to the size of the grant can be raised from other sources. This type of grant is another means by which foundations can determine the viability of an organization or program.

Planning Grants (Definitely Consider)

When planning a major new program, an agency may need to spend a good deal of time and money conducting research. A planning grant supports this initial project development work, which may include investigating the needs of constituents, consulting with experts in the field, or conducting research and planning activities.

Private Grant and Philanthropic Agencies (Definitely Consider)

Many resources are available which provide information on private grant and philanthropic agency opportunities. A thorough investigation and research on available grants is necessary to ensure mutually compatible interests and to confirm the current status of available funding. Examples of publicly accessible resources are summarized below.

- Information on current and archived Federal Register Grant Announcements can be accessed from The Grantsmanship Center (TGCI) on the Internet at: <http://www.tgci.com>.
- Another resource is the Foundation Center's RFP Bulletin Grants Page on Health at: <http://foundationcenter.org>.
- Research www.ecivis.com for a contract provider of a web-based Grants Locator system for government and foundation grants specifically designed for local government.



Program or Support Grants (Definitely Consider)

A program or support grant is given to support a specific or connected set of activities that typically have a beginning and an end, specific objectives, and predetermined costs. Listed below are some of the most common types of program or support grants:

Seed Money or Start-up Grants (Definitely Consider)

These grants help a new organization or program in its first few years. The idea is to give the new effort a strong push forward, so it can devote its energy early on to setting up programs without worrying constantly about raising money. Such grants are often for more than one year, and frequently decrease in amount each year.

Land and Water Conservation Fund (In Use)

The Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) is America's most important program to conserve irreplaceable lands and improve outdoor recreation opportunities throughout the nation. The program works in partnership with federal, state and local efforts to protect land in our national parks, national wildlife refuges, national forests, national trails, and other public lands; to preserve working forests and ranchlands; to support state and local parks and playgrounds; to preserve battlefields and other historic and cultural sites; and to provide the tools that communities need to meet their diverse conservation and recreation needs. The years-long effort to permanently authorize and fund LWCF, which culminated in the enactment of the Great American Outdoors Act in August 2020, further underscored the need for a comprehensive database of LWCF investments. Every state runs their State and Local Assistance Program in a slightly unique manner, so we encourage any municipal or county parks personnel interested in LWCF to contact their LWCF State Liaison Officer (typically someone at a state's department of fish and game, environmental protection, or conservation and recreation) for more information.

Naming Rights (Possibly Consider)

Many agencies throughout the country have successfully sold the naming rights for newly constructed facilities or when renovating existing buildings. Additionally, newly developed and renovated parks have been successfully funded through the sale of naming rights. Generally, the cost for naming rights offsets the development costs associated with the improvement. People incorrectly assume that selling the naming rights for facilities is reserved for professional stadiums and other high profile team sport venues. This trend has expanded in recent years to include public recreation centers and facilities as viable naming rights sales opportunities.

Naming rights can be a one-time payment or amortized with a fixed payment schedule over a defined period of time. During this time, the sponsor retains the "rights" to have the park, facility, or amenity named for them. Also during this time, all publications, advertisements, events, and activities could have the sponsoring group's name as the venue. Naming rights negotiations need to be developed by legal professionals to ensure that the contractual obligation is equitable to all agents and provides remedies to change or cancel the arrangements at any time during the agreement period.

Philanthropic (Possibly Consider)

Philanthropy can be defined as the concept of voluntary giving by an individual or group to promote the common good and to improve the quality of life. Philanthropy generally takes the form of donor programs, capital campaigns, and volunteers/in-kind services.



The time commitment to initiate a philanthropic campaign can be significant. If an agency decides to implement a capital fundraising campaign and current resources that could be dedicated to such a venture are limited, it may be recommended that the agency outsource some or most of this task to a non-profit or private agency experienced in managing community-based capital fundraising campaigns.

Capital campaigns should be limited to large-scale capital projects that are desired by the community but for which dedicated funding is not readily available.

Foundation/Gifts (Possibly Consider)

These dollars are received from tax-exempt, non-profit organization. The funds are private donations in promotion of specific causes, activities, or issues. They offer a variety of means to fund capital projects, including capital campaigns, gifts catalogs, fundraisers, endowments, etc.

Friends Associations (Possibly Consider)

These groups are typically formed to raise money for a single purpose that could include a park facility or program that will benefit a particular special interest population or the community as a whole.

Gift Catalogs (Possibly Consider)

Gift catalogs provide organizations the opportunity to let the community know what their needs are on a yearly basis. The community purchases items from the gift catalog and donates them to an agency.

Volunteer Programs/In-Kind Services

This revenue source is an indirect source in that persons donate time to assist an agency in providing a product or service on an hourly basis. This reduces cost in providing the service, plus it builds advocacy for the system. To manage a volunteer program, an agency typically dedicates a staff member to oversee the program for the entire agency.

Adopt-a-Park/Adopt-a-Trail (In Use)

Programs such as adopt-a-park may be created with and supported by the residents, businesses, and/or organizations located in the park's vicinity. These programs allow volunteers to actively assist in improving and maintaining parks, related facilities, and the community in which they live.

Neighborhood Park Watch (Definitely Consider)

As a way to reduce costs associated with vandalism and other crimes against property, an agency may consider a neighborhood park watch program. This program develops community ownership of an agency's facilities.

Gifts in Perpetuity (Definitely Consider)

Irrevocable Remainder Trusts (Definitely Consider)

These trusts are set up with individuals who typically have more than a million dollars in wealth. They will leave a portion of their wealth to an agency in a trust fund that allows the fund to grow over a period of time and then is available to use a portion of the interest to support specific park and recreation facilities or programs that are designated by the trustee.

Life Estates (Definitely Consider)

This revenue source is available when someone wants to leave their property to an agency in exchange for their continued residence on the property until their death. An agency can usually use a portion of



the property for park and recreational purposes, and then use all of it after the person's death. This revenue source is very popular for individuals who have a lot of wealth and their estate will be highly taxed at their death. Their benefactors will have to sell their property because of probate costs. Life Estates allow individuals to receive a good yearly tax deduction on their property while leaving property for the community. Agencies benefit because they do not have to pay for the land.

Maintenance Endowments (Definitely Consider)

Maintenance Endowments are set up for organizations and individuals to invest in ongoing maintenance improvements, and infrastructure needs of specific/targeted facilities. Endowments retain money from user fees, individual gifts, impact fees, development rights, partnerships, conservation easements, and for wetland mitigations.

Community Service Fees and Assessments

Capital Improvement Fees (Possibly Consider)

These fees are on top of the set user rate for accessing facilities such as sport and tournament venues and are used to support capital improvements that benefit the user of the facility.

Development Surcharge/Fee (Possibly Consider)

Some agencies have added a surcharge on every transaction, admission, or registration to generate an improvement or development fund.

Dog Park Fees (Possibly Consider)

These fees are attached to kennel clubs who pay for the rights to have dog park facilities for their own exclusive use. Fees are on the dogs themselves and/or on the people who take care of other people's dogs.

Equipment Rental (In Use)

This revenue source is generated from the rental of equipment such as tables and chairs tents, stages, bicycles, roller blades, boogie boards, etc. that are used for recreation purposes.

Flexible Fee Strategies (Definitely Consider)

This pricing strategy would allow an agency to maximize revenues during peak times and premium sites/areas with higher fees and to fill in excess capacity during low use times with lower fees to maximize play.

Franchise Fee on Cable (Possibly Consider)

This would allow an agency to add a franchise fee on cable designated for parks and recreation. The normal fee is \$1.00 a month or \$12.00 a year per household. Fees usually go toward land acquisition or capital improvements.

Lighting Fees (In Use)

Some agencies charge additional fees for lighting as it applies to leagues, special use sites, and special facilities that allow play after daylight hours. This fee may include utility demand charges.



Parking Fee (Definitely Consider)

This fee applies to parking at selected destination facilities such as sports complexes, stadiums, and other attractions to help offset capital and operational cost. Fees charged for after-hours overnight usage of parking facilities or for storage at parking facilities with excess space.

Percent-for-Art Legislation (Possibly Consider)

Percent-for-art legislation dedicates a percentage (usually .5 to 2) of publicly funded capital improvement projects (CIP) for art in public places, usually in, on, or adjacent to the project, building, or park construction or improved. This guarantees funding for public art projects and that public art projects planned with each new improvement. This can also be an Art-in-the-Park program.

Processing/Convenience Fees (Definitely Consider)

This is a surcharge or premium placed on electronic transfers of funds, automatic payments, or other conveniences.

Recreation Service Fee (Definitely Consider)

The Recreation Service Fee is a dedicated user fee that can be established by a local ordinance or other government procedure for the purpose of constructing and maintaining recreation facilities. The fee can apply to all organized activities that require a reservation of some type, or other purposes as defined by an agency. Examples of such generally accepted activities that are assigned a service fee include adult basketball, volleyball, and softball leagues; youth baseball, soccer, and softball leagues; and special interest classes. The fee, above and beyond the user fee, allows participants to contribute toward the construction and/or maintenance of the facilities being used.

Recreation Surcharge Fees on Sports and Entertainment Tickets, Classes, MasterCard, Visa (Possibly Consider)

This fee is a surcharge on top of the regular sports revenue fee or convenience fee for use of MasterCard and Visa. The fee usually is no more than \$5.00 and is usually \$3.00 on all exchanges. The money earned would be used to help pay off the costs of improvements or for operational purposes.

Residency Cards (Possibly Consider)

Non-residents may purchase “residency” on an annual basis for the privilege of receiving the resident discounts on fees, charges, tours, shows, reservations, and other benefits typically afforded to residents only. The resident cards can range in price, but are often at least equivalent to what a resident pays in taxes annually to support operations, maintenance, and debt service.

Room Overrides on Hotels for Sports Tournaments and Special Events (Possibly Consider)

Agencies have begun to keep a percentage of hotel rooms reservation fees booked when the agency hosts a major sports tournament or special event. The overrides are usually \$5.00 to \$10.00 depending on the type of room. Monies collected would help offset operational costs for hosting the events.

Security and Clean-Up Fees (In Use)

An agency may charge groups and individuals security and clean-up fees for special events other type of events held at facilities.



Self-Insurance Surcharge (Possibly Consider)

Some agencies have added a surcharge on every transaction, admission, or registration to generate a self-insured liability fund.

Signage Fees (Possibly Consider)

This revenue source charges people and businesses with signage fees at key locations with high visibility for short-term events. Signage fees may range in price from \$25-\$100 per sign based on the size of the sign and location.

Trail Fee (Possibly Consider)

These fees are used for access to closed bike trails to support operational costs. Fees for bike trails are typically \$35 to \$50 a year. This arrangement works for bike trails if the conditions of dedicated use, fencing for control, and continuous patrolling/monitoring are in place. Multi-purpose trails that are totally open for public use without these conditions in place make it difficult to charge fees and are nearly impossible to monitor.

Utility Roundup Programs (Possibly Consider)

Some park and recreation agencies have worked with local utilities on a round up program whereby a consumer can pay the difference between their bill and the next highest even dollar amount as a donation to the agency. Ideally, these monies would be used to support utility improvements such as sports lighting, irrigation cost, and HVAC costs.

Contractual Services

Cell Towers and Wi-Fi (Possibly Consider)

Cell towers sited in strategic park locations are another potential source of revenue that an agency may consider. Typically, agencies engage in this service as a means of enhancing overall operational cost recovery.

Another type of revenue for a facility or complex can come from providing sites for supporting Wi-Fi technology. In California, the State Park System is providing wireless internet access and is charging \$7.95 for 24 hours of connectivity (approximately \$.33 per hour) within its service area. They have connected 85 state parks with SBC Communications. For more information, contact California State Parks at www.parks.ca.gov. [2015/16 update: It is unclear whether CA is still charging for this service; this is being further researched]

Concession Management (In Use)

Concession management is the retail sale or rental of soft goods, hard goods, or consumable items. Through contracting, the agency either receives a percentage of the gross sales or the net revenue dollars from the revenue above direct expenses. Net proceeds are generally more difficult to monitor.

Merchandising Sales or Services (In Use)

This revenue source comes from the public or private sector on resale items from gift shops, pro-shops, restaurants, concessions, and coffee shops for either all of the sales or a defined percentage of the gross sales. Typically, agencies engage in this type of service as a convenience to their patrons and as a means of enhancing overall operational cost recovery.



Private Concessionaires (In Use)

Contracts with private sector concessionaires provide resources to operate desirable recreational activities. These services are typically financed, constructed, and operated by a private business or a non-profit organization with additional compensation paid to an agency.

Permits, Licensing Rights and Use of Collateral Assets

Agricultural Leases (In Use)

In some agency parks, low land property along rivers, or excess land may be leased to farmers for crops.

Booth Lease Space (In Use)

Some agencies sell booth space to sidewalk vendors in parks or at special events for a flat rate or based on volume of product sold. The booth space can also be used for sporting events and tournaments.

Catering Permits and Services (In Use)

This is a license to allow caterers to work in the system on a permit basis with a set fee or percentage of food sales returning to the agency. Also, many agencies have their own catering service or an authorized provider list and receive a percentage of dollars from the sale of food.

Filming Rights (Definitely Consider)

Many agencies issue permits so that park sites may be used for commercial film and photography activities. The production company pays a daily fee for the site plus the loss of revenue the agency would incur during use of the community space.

Land Swaps (Possibly Consider)

An agency may trade property to improve access or protection of resources. This could include a property gain by the agency for non-payment of taxes or a situation where a developer needs a larger or smaller space to improve its profitability. The agency would typically gain more property for more recreation opportunities in exchange for the land swap.

Leasebacks on Recreational Facilities (Possibly Consider)

Many agencies do not have adequate capital dollars to build desired revenue-producing facilities. One option is to hire a private investor to build the facility according to the specifications requested with the investment company financing the project. An agency would then lease the property back from the investor over 20+ years. This can be reversed whereby an agency builds the facility and leases to a private management company who then operates the property for a percentage of gross dollars to pay off the construction loans through a subordinate lease.

Licensing Rights (Possibly Consider)

This revenue source allows an agency to license its name on all resale items that private or public vendors use when they sell clothing or other items with its agency's name on it. The normal licensing fee is 6 to 10 percent of the cost of the resale item.

Manufacturing Product Testing and Display or Research (Possibly Consider)

An agency may work with specific manufacturers to test their products in a park, recreation facility, or in a program or service. The agency may test the product under normal conditions and report the results back to the manufacturer. Examples include lighting, playground equipment, tires on vehicles, mowers,



irrigation systems, seed & fertilizers, etc. The agency may receive the product for free but must pay for the costs of installation and for tracking results. Research Fees may be charged to allow research to occur on park lands or related to equipment used at Parks. Companies may pay to have their equipment installed and tested to prove durability and user satisfaction. Product Placement fees may also be an option – having a company not only donate their equipment but also pay a fee to have their equipment used at a public facility.

Private Developers (Possibly Consider)

Developers may lease land through a subordinate lease that pays out a set dollar amount plus a percentage of gross dollars for recreation enhancements. These could include sports complexes and recreation centers.

Recycling Centers (In Use)

Some agencies and counties operate recycling centers for wood, mulch, and glass as revenue generators for their systems.

Rentals of Houses and Buildings by Private Citizens (Possibly Consider)

Many agencies will rent out facilities such as homes to individual citizens for revenue purposes.

Sale of Development Rights (Possibly Consider)

Some agencies sell their development rights below park ground or along trails to utility companies. The agency would receive a yearly fee on a linear foot basis. This type of activity would be dependent on grant restrictions on property purchased with grant funding.

Special Use Permits (In Use)

Special permits allow individuals to use specific park property for financial gain. The agency receives either a set amount of money or a percentage of the gross service provided.

Subordinate Easements – Recreation/Natural Area Easements (Possibly Consider)

This revenue source is available when an agency allows utility companies, businesses, or individuals to develop some type of an improvement above ground or below ground on its property. Subordinate easements are typically arranged over a set period of time, with a set dollar amount that is allocated to the agency on an annual basis.

Surplus Sale of Equipment by Auction (In Use)

Agencies often have annual surplus auctions to get rid of old and used equipment, generating additional income on a yearly basis.

Enterprise Funds (In Use)

These funds establish business units that are self-sustaining through fees and charges. Debt service and all indirect costs should be allocated or attributed to enterprise funds. Any excess revenue generated is maintained by the fund for future needs and cannot be used by another fund or department. Examples include premier sports tournament complexes.



State Park Funding

(As reported in *Governing Magazine* [online, BY [MIKE MACIAG](#) | DECEMBER 2016] SOURCE: *National Association of State Park Directors Annual Information Exchange*)

Across all 50 states, parks generate an average of 45 percent of funding for their operating expenses. Cut backs in funding are causing such actions as shuttering of state park pools, laying off employees, and closing of parks. On the other side of the equation based on the 2014-15 fiscal cycle, eighteen states

offer vanity license plates to raise revenue for parks. All but five states solicit donations. Adding a tax to gasoline or real estate transactions is another common approach. A number of states also apply various types of registration fees, and allow paid park rentals, including lucrative weddings. Some states have pursued partnerships, leasing some parks to local jurisdictions, which have taken over management, while other localities offered to assist with cleanup efforts. Voter-approved sales tax and bonding issues have gained some momentum. Other ideas under consideration include voluntary \$5 parks donation as part of motor vehicle registration, and collecting fees for single-use plastic bags or expanding the list of beverages subject to container deposits. Advocates point out the economic activity and other benefits that parks support.

New Hampshire is the only state where parks are entirely self-funded, with the exception of capital expenditures. One way the parks there have managed without any added state funding is through annual park passes, and by greatly expanding their retail sales program at campgrounds and beaches, and a state-owned ski resort and natural gorge attraction provides reliable sources of park revenue. According to the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources: Instead of paying for special stickers or decals to apply to vehicles for parks access, the Minnesota Department of Motor Vehicles is making a new parks-and-recreation-themed license plate available that will replace the need for an annual state parks permit. The cost will start at \$60, plus tax. The total includes a one-time \$10 fee for the plate itself and a minimum \$50 contribution (renewable annually). The plate provides their owners with unlimited access to all 75 Minnesota state parks and recreation areas for the year, replacing the need for an annual vehicle permit (a \$25 value). Proceeds from license plate sales will help fund the operations and maintenance of Minnesota state parks and trails.

Other Options

Land Trusts (Definitely Consider)

Many agencies have developed land trusts to help secure and fund the cost of acquiring land that needs to be preserved and protected for greenway purposes. This may also be a good source for the acquisition of future lands.

Positive Cash Flow (Definitely Consider)

Depending on how aggressively an agency incorporates marketing and management strategies, there may be a positive fund balance at the end of each year. While current facilities, projections, and fee policies do not anticipate a positive cash flow, the climate can change. The ending positive balance could be used, for example, to establish a maintenance endowment for agency recreation facilities, to set aside funds for capital replacement and/or repair, or to generate a fund balance for contingency or new programming opportunities.



Cost Saving Measures

In addition to aligning cost recovery with goals, charging appropriate fees, and using traditional and alternative funding mechanisms, several cost saving measures can improve the overall cost recovery picture for an agency.

Change Maintenance Standards/Practices (Definitely Consider)

- Add one extra day onto the mowing interval: thus, reducing the amount of mowing in a season.
- Evaluate and determine actual maintenance needs and schedules for upkeep of different facilities and landscape features/types. Based on needs, evaluate resource needs (equipment, staff, etc.) and production rates of staff/equipment for the system's regularly occurring maintenance work and prioritize maintenance program needs, schedules, and relevant resource allocations.
- Consider turf management strategies by turf use/wear – high intensity use and maintenance needs (such as sports fields) versus low intensity use areas such as lawns along the edge of a woodlot or roadway – there are usually areas of turf that are regularly maintained because “they have always been mowed”; by changing the maintenance strategy to not mowing or not regularly mowing such areas, less time/resources need to be dedicated to mowing overall.
- Naturalizing areas of lawn where you don't need lawn is a “going green” type of practice that also reduces maintenance needs/costs.
- Buildings/Facilities
 - Evaluate needs and consider in-house versus contracted maintenance workers for different needed services/trades.
 - Standardize equipment, fixtures, and relevant materials.
 - Are some facilities in such disrepair that continuing to throw limited funding on “band-aids” no longer practical?
 - In designing new facilities, are simple sustainability factors being vetted (such as orienting the building to maximize solar gain to reduce lighting and heating costs)?
- Add energy efficient fixtures, low flow water fixtures, eliminate throw away products like paper towels and replace with energy efficient hand dryers.
- Strategically locate trash and recyclable containers to reduce cost of having staff empty these and spend time picking up trash/recyclables that are not properly placed by patrons.
- Reduce cleaning frequency of office spaces and centralize trash and recyclables into one location in employee work areas to save on costs of related to housekeeping.
- Consider having staff complete multiple tasks at the same time – emptying recyclables and trash at the same time as doing rounds or inspections.
- Educate users to better utilize existing facilities and resources to cut down costs – clean up after themselves.
- Equipment and Supplies
 - Purchase better equipment that last longer and requires less maintenance – saving money on the front end does not always result in cost savings overall.
 - Standardize equipment (such as vehicles, grounds equipment and tools, etc.) as a way to increase efficiency in training staff to use it, and as a means to simplify and reduce costs associated with parts inventory and maintenance/repair programs (ex. Mechanic places one order for 10 air filters for 1 type of lawnmower and gets bulk price from one vendor, versus ordering 10 different filters for 10 different mowers, from multiple vendors and keeping track of it all)

- Consider leasing vehicles or other heavily used equipment - it can be more cost effective for an organization to lease vehicles or equipment and rotate their fleet regularly versus allocating resources to maintain and repair aging fleets of old, well used vehicles/equipment that have higher likelihood of breakdowns and associated loss of production time.
- Use volunteers to assist with housekeeping and maintenance.
- Solicit in-kind donation of time and services in exchange for maintenance assistance

Contract Re-negotiate or Re-bid (In Use)

At every opportunity, review contracts to assure you are not paying more than you have to, or are receiving the maximum amount of revenue possible.

Cost Avoidance (Definitely Consider)

An agency must maintain a position of not being everything for everyone. It must be driven by the market and stay with its core businesses. By shifting roles away from being a direct provider of facilities, programs, or services, an agency may experience additional savings. This process is referred to as *cost avoidance*. The estimated savings could be realized through partnering, outsourcing, or deferring to another provider in the provision of a service and/or facility. One example is purchasing in bulk.

Greening Trends

Rooftop Gardens and Park Structures (Possibly Consider)

Rooftop gardens create respites in a densely built environment and help reduce the urban heat island effects. In addition, the lack of availability and affordability of urban real estate has continued the trend of parks built over structures such as parking garages and other structures.

Green Practices

- Use light, water, and motion sensors (In Use)
- Conduct energy audits (In Use)
- Update to energy efficient ballasts, motors, appliances (In Use)
- Use electric and hybrid vehicles (Definitely Consider)
- Develop “Pack It Out” trash program (Possibly Consider)
- Use greywater (Possibly Consider)
- Use solar and wind energy (Possibly Consider)
- Implement green operating practices (Definitely Consider)

Many agencies miss the easiest green practices in their everyday operating procedures and policies. These include administrative procedures, best operating standards, and sustainable stewardship performance measures. Many of the industry best practices outlined below (*Table 10*) may be currently and successfully employed by your agency.



Table 10: Green Practices Focus Area and Action Step

Focus Area	Action Step
Administrative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Recycle Office Trash (consolidate trash and recyclables to one common location – reduce cost to empty containers in each office) (In Use) ● Clean offices weekly instead of daily (In Use) ● Go Paperless (Definitely Consider) ● Conserve Resources (In Use) ● Flex Scheduling (In Use) ● Virtual Meetings (In Use)
Operating Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Preventative Maintenance (In Use) ● Reduce Driving (Definitely Consider) ● Eliminate Environmentally Negative Chemicals and Materials (Definitely Consider) ● Green Purchasing Policies (Possibly Consider) ● LEED® Design (Possibly Consider) ● Purchase better equipment and supplies that require less maintenance and are more durable (Definitely Consider)
Sustainable Stewardship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Re-analyze and Revised Practices and Standards (Definitely Consider) ● Monitor and Report Results (Definitely Consider) ● Lead by Example (Definitely Consider) ● Public Education - agencies should lead by example teaching the public a little bit about what green practices actually are and how they might be able to incorporate some of the same features (maybe raingardens or LED lighting) in their own home to help conserve our shared natural resources. (Definitely Consider) ● Incorporate Stewardship Principles in all Park and Recreation Services (Definitely Consider) ● Seek Available Grant Funding and Initiative Awards (Definitely Consider)



Charles County
Recreation & Parks

b BerryDunn



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- Methodology
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April 22

2  RRC

Introduction

- The purpose of this study was to gather feedback to better understand the community's needs and desires for land preservation along with parks and recreation facilities, programs and services.
- This survey research effort and subsequent analysis were designed to assist Charles County in developing a plan to reflect the community's needs and desires.



3  RRC

Methodology

Primary methods:

1 = Statistically Valid (Invitation Survey)
Mailed survey and postcard with an invitation to complete online through password protected website.



365 - Invitation Online and Paper surveys completed
+/- 5.1% Margin of Error

2 = Open Link Survey
Online survey available to all residents of Charles County.



727 - Open Link Surveys Completed

4,000 Surveys and Postcards Mailed
(3,948 delivered)



4 

Weighting the Data

1

The underlying data from the survey were weighted by age and race, to ensure appropriate representation of **Charles County residents** across different demographic cohorts in the sample.



2

Using U.S. Census Data, the age and race distributions in the total sample were adjusted to more closely match the actual population profile of **Charles County**.

5 

Key Findings

Living in Charles County



Majority of respondents are long-term residents of Charles County. A total of 72% of the Invite sample have lived in the county over 11 years with an average of 21.5 years. A total of 45% of Invite respondents reside in Waldorf, and 16% in La Plata. The remaining respondents are dispersed across the county.



Satisfaction

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very satisfied, 42% of Invite respondents rated their current satisfaction with recreation opportunities in Charles County a 4 or 5. The average rating was 3.2, indicating some area for improvement.



Current Usage

The most frequented locations for the Invite sample include nature/passive parks, regional parks/athletic fields, trails and historic sites. Open link respondents visit these sites more often. Invite respondents most frequently participate in adult programs, birthday parties, and sports clinics and programs. There are some differences in use by sample type.

6 RRC

Key Findings

Proximity to Recreation



Distance to recreation facilities varies for Invite respondents. About a quarter (25%) travel 4-9 miles to their most visited facility, 38% 5-9 miles away, while another quarter travel 10-19 miles away. Open link respondents tend to travel further to their most visited facility.



Communication

There is room for improvement to better leverage communication efforts and information dissemination about parks and recreation to further create awareness in Charles County. A total of 61% of respondents say that improved communication about Parks and Recreation offerings would assist them in participating more frequently in activities, facilities and programs. About half of the Invite sample use word of mouth to hear about Parks and Recreation opportunities followed by an online search and the Charles County website. Open link respondents use the variety of communication methods more frequently. The average rating of effectiveness was a 2.6 out of 5 with 5 being "very effective" for the Invite sample.



Importance/Quality of Life

There is strong support for land and agricultural preservation. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being "very important", a categories related to agricultural and land preservation rated at least a 4.1 for both Invite and Open link respondents. Park recreation and open space are also highly important to respondents, although slightly less than agricultural and land preservation. The top-rated categories (average 4 and above out of 5 in importance) for the Invite sample are the existing parks, recreation and openspace opportunities, recreational programs for youth, and new opportunities for walking, hiking, running, and bicycling.

7 RRC

Key Findings



Future Needs

Invite and Open link respondents agree that the most important needs for outdoor recreation are park outdoor activities and trail-based recreation. The top two highest rated most important future needs are park outdoor activities and trail-based recreation. For additional recreational amenities, Invite respondents would like to see paved walking and biking trails, an indoor fitness and exercise facility, and community parks.



Funding Support

Respondents are split between whether a fee increase would impact their visitation or not. About a third of Invite respondents say a fee increase would not limit participation at all, another third said it would limit participation somewhat, and the others say it would limit participation significantly or they don't know. They would prefer to support parks and recreation through more private/public partnerships followed by a bond referendum for specific projects.

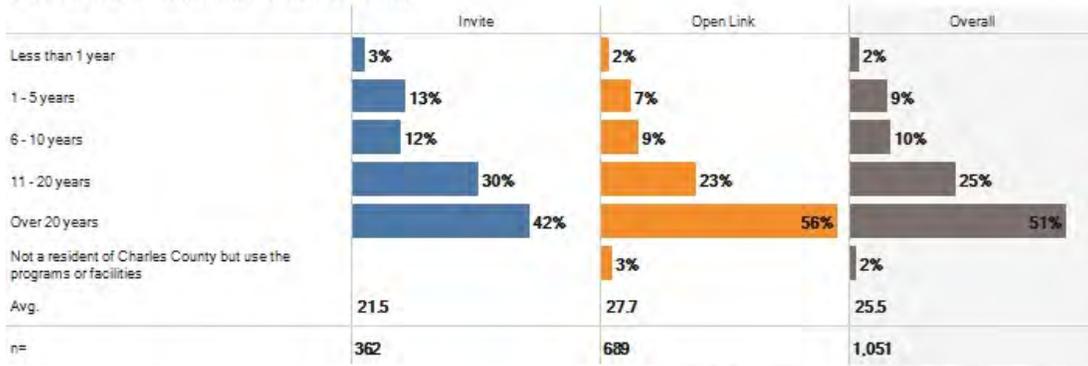
Living in Charles County



Length of Time in Charles County

Majority of respondents are long-term residents of Charles County. A total of 42% of the Invite sample have lived in the county over 20 years. Open link respondents have lived in the area slightly longer than the Invite (average of 27.7 years vs. 21.5 years Invite).

Q 1: How long have you lived in Charles County?



*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample
Source: RRC Associates

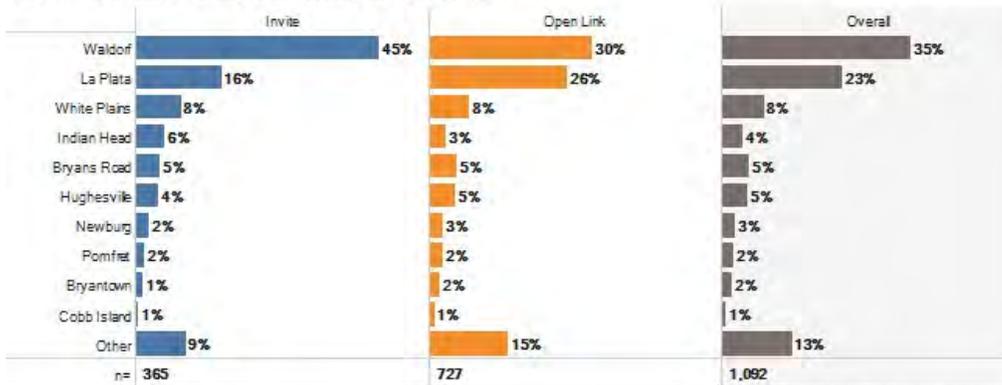
April 22

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Location of Residence in Charles County

A total of 45% of Invite respondents reside in Waldorf, and 16% in La Plata. The remaining respondents are dispersed across the county.

Q 2: Where in Charles County or surrounding area do you live?



*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample
Source: RRC Associates

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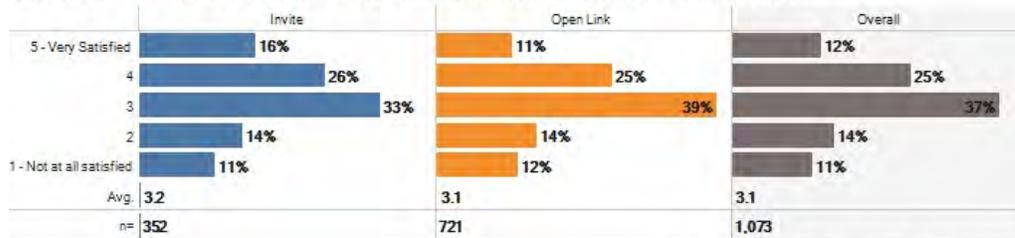
Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation



Satisfaction with Parks and Recreation

Respondents are moderately satisfied (average of 3.2 out of 5 for the Invite sample) with the availability of recreational opportunities within Charles County, which indicates some room for improvement. Invite respondents are slightly more satisfied than the Open link sample.

Q4: How satisfied are you with the availability of recreational opportunities within Charles County?



*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample
Source: RRC Associates

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Current Usage



Frequency of Use

Q 5: Have you or members of your household visited any of the following Charles County locations during the past 12 months?

Location	Invite				Open Link				Overall			
	1-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-15 Times	16+ Times	1-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-15 Times	16+ Times	1-5 Times	6-10 Times	11-15 Times	16+ Times
Nature/Passive Parks (e.g., Mallows Bay, Port Tobacco River, Gilbert Run)	11%	16%	38%	35%	19%	19%	43%	19%	16%	18%	41%	24%
Regional Parks/Athletic Fields (e.g., White Plains, Laurel Springs, Bandville)	13%	9%	34%	38%	33%	13%	29%	25%	33%	11%	31%	30%
Trails (e.g., Indian Head Rail Trail, Port Tobacco River Park)	20%	12%	29%	40%	26%	17%	32%	25%	24%	15%	31%	30%
Historic/Cultural Sites		44%		48%	11%		51%	32%		48%		38%
Recreation Centers (e.g., Capital Clubhouse, Waldorf Senior and Recreational Center)	9%	9%	24%	59%	9%	29%		52%	9%	9%	27%	54%
Indoor Pools (e.g., Donald M. Wade Aquatic Center, North Point High School)		19%		69%		19%		64%		19%		65%
Dog Parks (e.g., White Plains, Turkey Hill Dog Parks)		19%		71%	9%		21%	62%		20%		65%
White Plains Golf Course (classes, lessons, or activities)		13%		79%		15%		74%		15%		76%
School-Based Community Centers (e.g., Billingsley, Henson, Wade)		9%		78%		11%		81%				80%
Equestrian Trails (e.g., Oak Ridge Park, Maxwell Hall Park Equestrian Area)		16%		80%		17%		73%		17%		76%
Outdoor Pools (e.g., La Plata High School, Thomas Stone High School)				81%		12%		80%		11%		81%
Other		11%		80%		11%	11%	72%		11%		74%



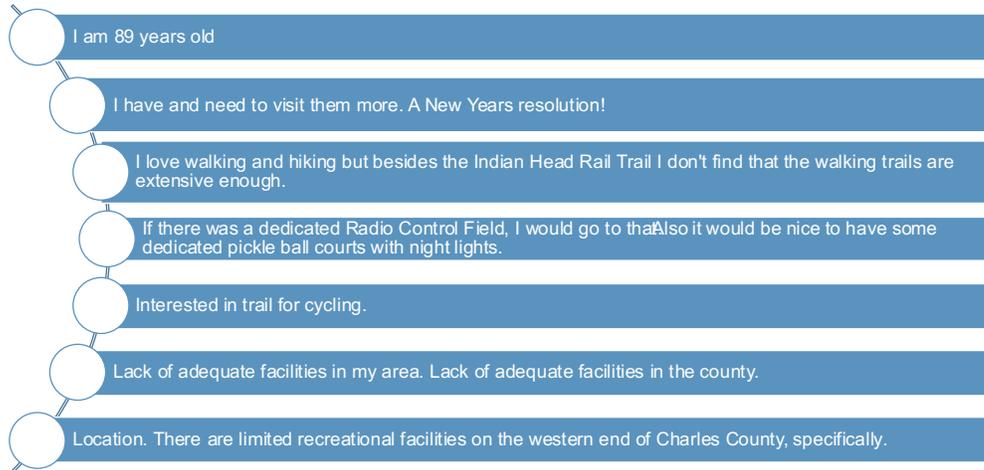
Source: RRC Associates
Response options are sorted in descending order by percentage who have visited



“If you haven’t visited any of Charles County’s parks or recreation facilities in the past 12 months, why not”

Open-ended Comments

The most common response to this question, is not surprisingly, the pandemic. A random selection of verbatim responses is shown below, excluding responses related to COVID -19. See Appendix for full listing of comments provided.

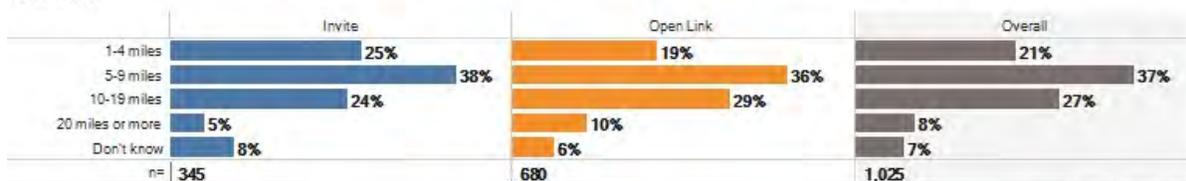


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Distance Traveled to Recreation Location

Distance to recreation locations varies. About a quarter of Invite respondents (25%) travel 1 -4 miles to their most visited facility, 38% 5 -9 miles, while another quarter travel 10 -19 miles. Open link respondents tend to travel further to their most visited facility.

Q 7: Referring to previous list of Charles County recreation locations, how far do you or your household travel to your most visited facility (one way)?

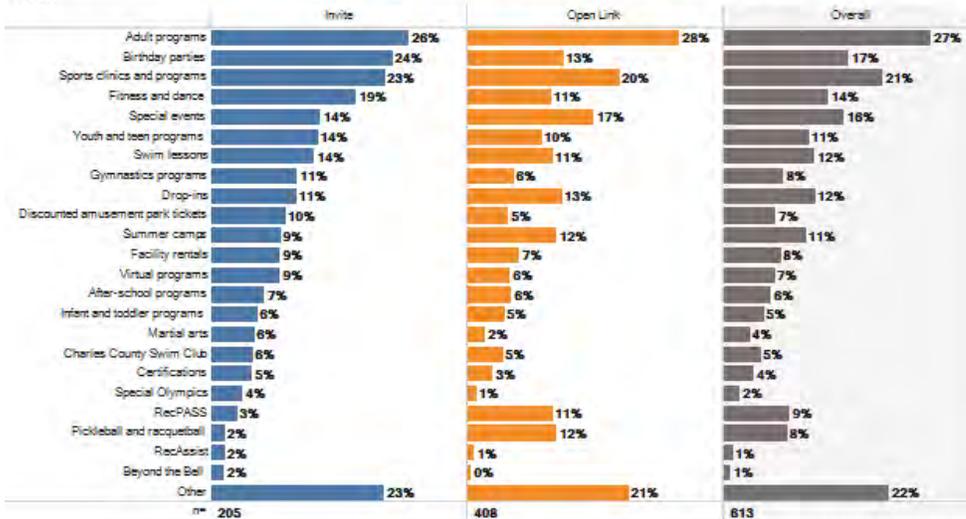


Source: RRC Associates

17 

Participation in Recreational Activities or Services

Q 8: In what recreational activities or services have you participated in and around Charles County in the past 12 months? (Check all that apply)

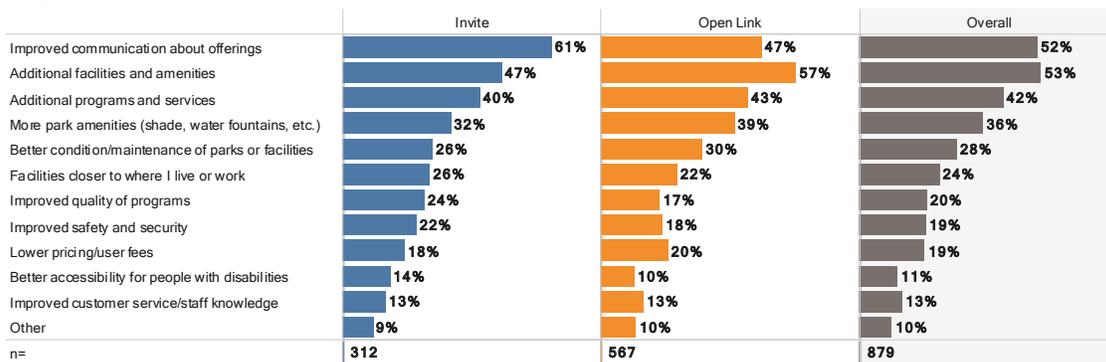


*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the invite sample. Source: RRC Associates

Most Important Areas to Increase Participation

Improved communication is the top priority for increasing participation in parks and recreation. Respondents would also like to see additional facilities, amenities, programs and services.

Q 10: What are the most important areas that, if addressed, would increase your participation in recreational activities, facilities, programs? (Check all that apply)



*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the invite sample. Source: RRC Associates

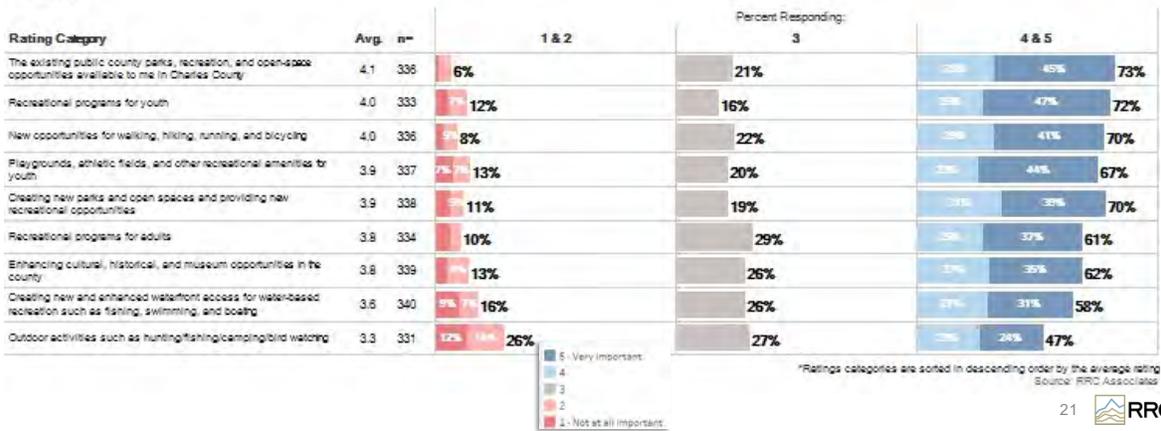
Importance/Quality of Life



Importance of Parks, Recreation and Open Space By Invite Sample

Almost all categories rated relatively high among Invite respondents (above 3.5 average rating), showing that there is a strong value placed on parks, recreation and open space in Charles County. The lowest rated category (average 3.3 rating) was outdoor activities such as hunting/fishing/camping and bird watching.

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following parks, recreation, and open space statements and agricultural and land preservation statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County?
*Invite Only



Importance of Parks, Recreation and Open Space By Averages

Almost all categories rated a 3.6 out of 5 with 5 being "very important" except for outdoor activities such as hunting/fishing/camping/bird watching. This demonstrates an overall highly invested community when it comes to parks, recreation and open space.

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following parks, recreation, and open space statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County?

Rating Category	Invite	Open Link	Overall
The existing public county parks, recreation, and open space opportunities available to me in Charles County	n=336 4.1	n=564 4.2	n=900 4.1
Recreational programs for youth	n=333 4.0	n=556 3.9	n=889 4.0
New opportunities for walking, hiking, running, and bicycling	n=336 4.0	n=568 4.0	n=904 4.0
Creating new parks and open spaces and providing new recreational opportunities	n=338 3.9	n=570 4.1	n=908 4.0
Playgrounds, athletic fields, and other recreational amenities for youth	n=337 3.9	n=566 3.7	n=903 3.8
Recreational programs for adults	n=334 3.8	n=563 3.8	n=897 3.8
Enhancing cultural, historical, and museum opportunities in the county	n=339 3.8	n=571 3.6	n=910 3.7
Creating new and enhanced waterfront access for water-based recreation such as fishing, swimming, and boating	n=340 3.6	n=570 3.8	n=910 3.7
Outdoor activities such as hunting/fishing/camping/bird watching	n=331 3.3	n=561 3.5	n=892 3.4

*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample. Source: RRC Associates

Importance of Agricultural and Land Preservation By Invite Sample

Agricultural and land preservation are highly important to the Invite sample with at least 74% of all respondents rating the categories as a 4 or 5, "very important".

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following agricultural and land preservation statements in terms of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County?

*Invite Only

Rating Category	Avg.	n=	Percent Responding:					
			1 & 2	3	4 & 5	Total		
Protecting environmentally-sensitive areas, wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes from development impacts	4.4	342	6%	7%	9%	19%	65%	83%
Preservation, protection, and conservation of natural resources	4.3	343	6%	7%	13%	20%	60%	80%
Preservation of the county's historic and archaeological resources	4.3	341	7%	7%	14%	22%	57%	79%
Preserve scenic views and rural character	4.3	342	7%	7%	14%	23%	56%	79%
Supporting farmers' use of their land for agritourism, ecotourism, and heritage tourism	4.2	342	6%	6%	17%	22%	55%	77%
Permanently preserving agricultural land capable of supporting a reasonable diversity of agricultural production	4.1	340	9%	11%	15%	25%	49%	74%

*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating. Source: RRC Associates

Importance of Agricultural and Land Preservation By Average

All categories related to agricultural and land preservation are of high importance, averaging at least a 4.1 out of 5 with 5 being “very important” for both Invite and Open link respondents. The top -rated category is protecting environmentally-sensitive areas, wetlands, floodplains and steep slopes from development impacts.

Q 11: Please indicate how you rate the importance of each of the following categories, and open space statements, and land preservation statements of how they impact your quality of life as a resident in Charles County?

Rating Category	Invite	Open Link	Overall
Protecting environmentally -sensitive areas, wetlands, floodplains, and steep slopes from development impacts	n=342 4.4	n=573 4.3	n=915 4.3
Preservation, protection, and conservation of natural resources	n=343 4.3	n=574 4.2	n=917 4.3
Preservation of the county's historic and archaeological resources	n=341 4.3	n=574 4.2	n=915 4.2
Preserve scenic views and rural character	n=342 4.3	n=575 4.3	n=917 4.3
Supporting farmers' use of their land for agritourism, ecotourism, and heritage tourism	n=342 4.2	n=574 4.2	n=916 4.2
Permanently preserving agricultural land capable of supporting a reasonable diversity of agricultural production	n=340 4.1	n=575 4.1	n=915 4.1

*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

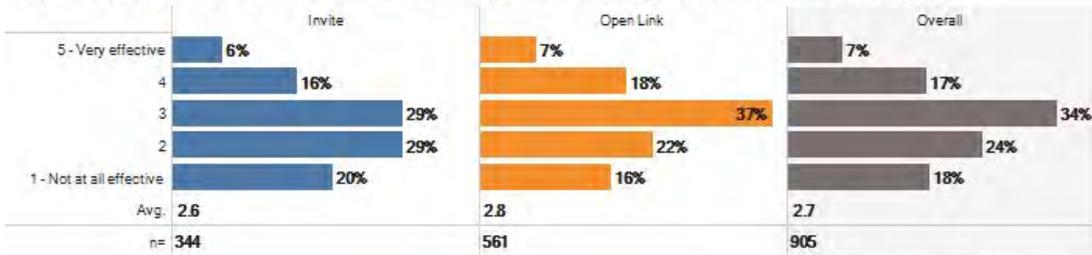
Communication



Effectiveness of Communication

There is room for improvement in terms of communication. The average rating for the Invite sample was 2.6 out of 5 with 5 being "very effective".

Q 12: How well does Charles County communicate with you about recreational activities, facilities, and programs?

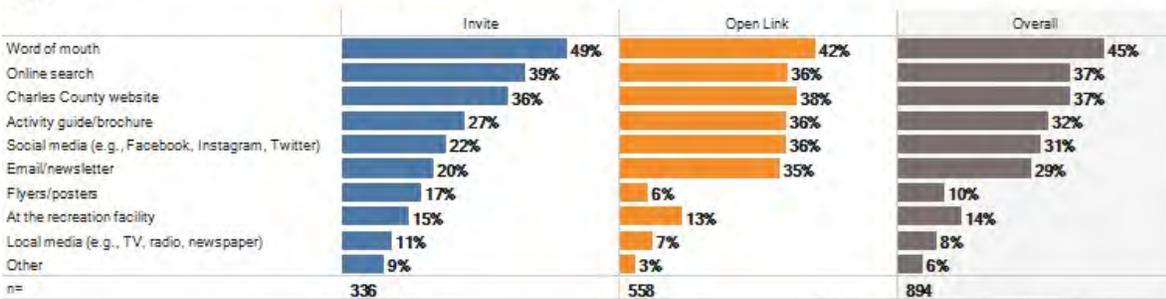


*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample. Source: RRC Associates

Communication Methods

About half of Invite respondents receive information via word of mouth, followed by an online search and the Charles County website. Open link respondents receive information from a variety of methods, most frequent also being word of mouth.

Q 13: How do you currently receive information on recreational activities, facilities, and programs offered by Charles County? (Check all that apply)

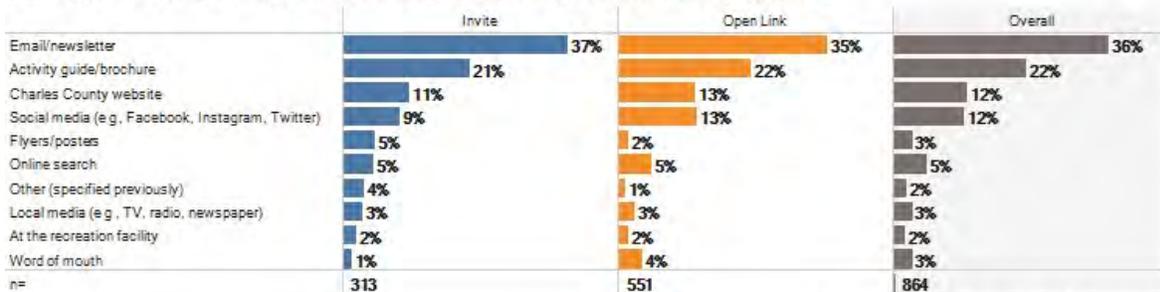


*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample. Source: RRC Associates

Best Communication Method

Although Invite and Open link respondents use word of mouth as their primary method for receiving communications from the county, it is also their lowest rated preference. Both samples agree that they prefer to receive information from an email/newsletter, the activity guide/brochure, and the Charles County website. Open link respondents are more interested in social media and less interested in flyers/posters.

Q 14: How do you want to receive information about recreational activities, facilities, and programs?



*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

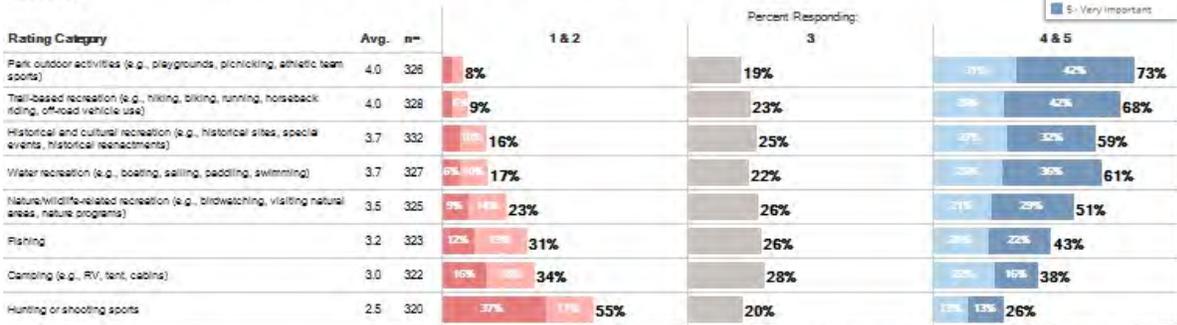
Future Recreational Activities, Facilities, and Programs



Important Needs for Outdoor Recreation Areas By Invite Sample

All categories rated relatively highly in terms of future needs except hunting or shooting sports. The top -rated areas for improvement are park outdoor activities and trail -based recreation.

Q 15: What are the most important needs for outdoor recreation areas that need to be added or improved in Charles County?
*Invite Only



*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating. Source: RRC Associates

Important Needs for Outdoor Recreation Areas By Average

Invite and Open link respondents agree that the most important needs for outdoor recreation to be added or improved are park outdoor activities and trail -based recreation. Open link respondents feel there is a greater need for nature/wildlife -related recreation.

Q 15: What are the most important needs for outdoor recreation areas that need to be added or improved in Charles County

Rating Category	Invite	Open Link	Overall
Park outdoor activities (e.g., playgrounds, picnicking, athletic team sports)	n=326 4.0	n=545 3.8	n=871 3.9
Trail-based recreation (e.g., hiking, biking, running, horseback riding, off-road vehicle use)	n=328 4.0	n=551 3.9	n=879 4.0
Water recreation (e.g., boating, sailing, paddling, swimming)	n=327 3.7	n=545 3.7	n=872 3.7
Historical and cultural recreation (e.g., historical sites, special events, historical reenactments)	n=332 3.7	n=547 3.6	n=879 3.6
Nature/wildlife-related recreation (e.g., birdwatching, visiting nature areas, nature programs)	n=325 3.5	n=549 3.7	n=874 3.6
Fishing	n=323 3.2	n=541 3.1	n=864 3.2
Camping (e.g., RV, tent, cabins)	n=322 3.0	n=546 3.0	n=868 3.0
Hunting or shooting sports	n=320 2.5	n=541 2.5	n=861 2.5

*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample. Source: RRC Associates

2 Most Important Needs for Outdoor Recreation Areas

The top two highest rated priorities are park outdoor activities and trail -based recreation. Water and historical/cultural recreation also rated highly. Open link respondents are more interested in nature/wildlife -related recreation.

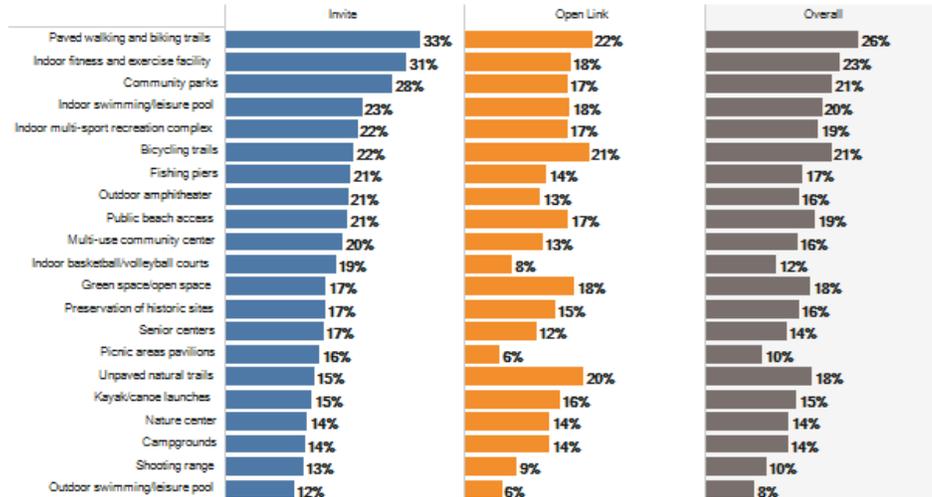
Q 16: From the list in the previous question, please select the top two highest priority items for you and your household.



Source: RRC Associates

Additional Recreational Amenities Slide 1 of 2

Q 17: What additional recreational amenities are most needed for you or your household in Charles County? (Select up to 5)

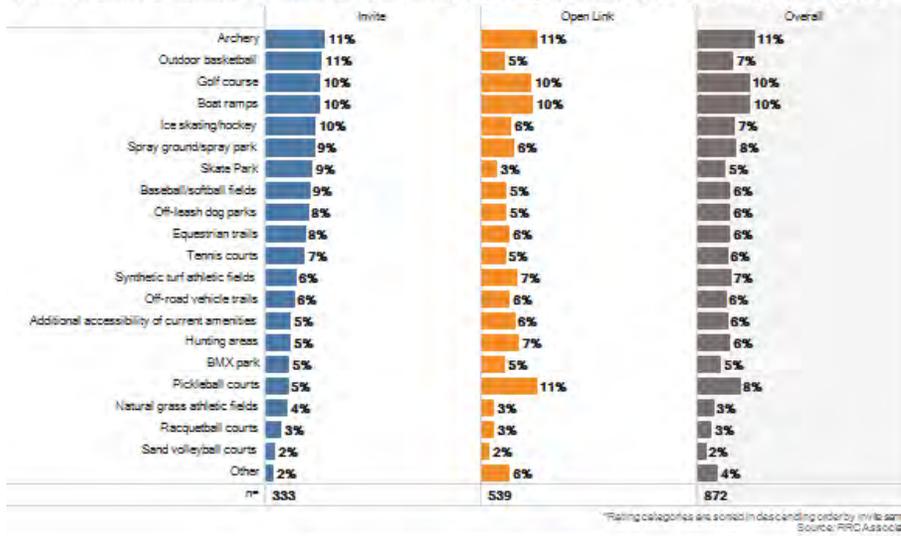


*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample
Source: RRC Associates

Additional Recreational Amenities

Slide 2 of 2

Q 17: What additional recreational amenities are most needed for you or your household in Charles County? (Select up to 5)



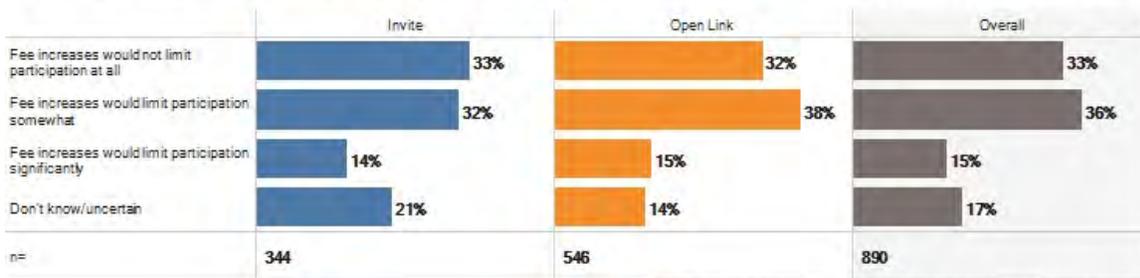
Financial Choices



Fee Increases and Participation

Respondents are split on how fee increases would impact their participation. About a third of Invite respondents say a fee increase would not limit participation at all, another third said it would limit participation somewhat, and the others say it would limit participation significantly or they don't know.

Q 18: Which of the following best describes the potential impact, if any, that fee increases would have on your current level of participation?



*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

Support for Funding Sources By Invite Sample

Most Invite respondents would support more private/public partnerships (71% rated a 4 “probably support” or 5 “definitely support”). The least supported option is increased property tax.

Q 19: Charles County receives funding from taxes and grants to operate and maintain the existing recreation facilities. Would you support any of the following new funding mechanisms to help pay for operations and maintenance costs of parks and recreation facilities and services in Charles County that currently exist or may be developed in the future?

*Invite Only



*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating.
Source: RRC Associates

Support for Funding Sources By Average Rating

The following categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the Invite sample. The ratings are from 1 “definitely not support”, to 5 “definitely support”.

Q 19: Charles County receives funding from taxes and grants to operate and maintain the existing recreation facilities. Would any of the following new funding mechanisms to help pay for operations and maintenance costs of parks and recreation facilities exist or may be developed in the future?

Rating Category	Invite	Open Link	Overall
More private/public partnerships	n=308 3.9	n=492 4.0	n=800 4.0
Bond referendum for specific projects	n=280 3.5	n=435 3.6	n=715 3.6
New hospitality tax	n=303 2.8	n=479 2.8	n=782 2.8
New parcel tax	n=292 2.4	n=468 2.3	n=760 2.3
Increased property tax	n=323 1.8	n=515 1.7	n=838 1.8

*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

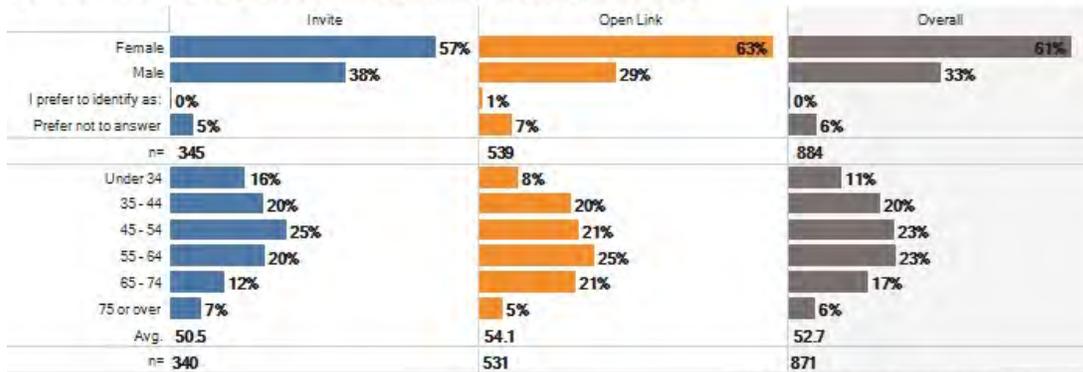
Demographics



Gender & Age

More respondents were female. The Invite sample was weighted by age using Census data to better reflect the community profile of Charles County

Q 21: Please indicate the gender with which you identify: & Q 22: What is your age?

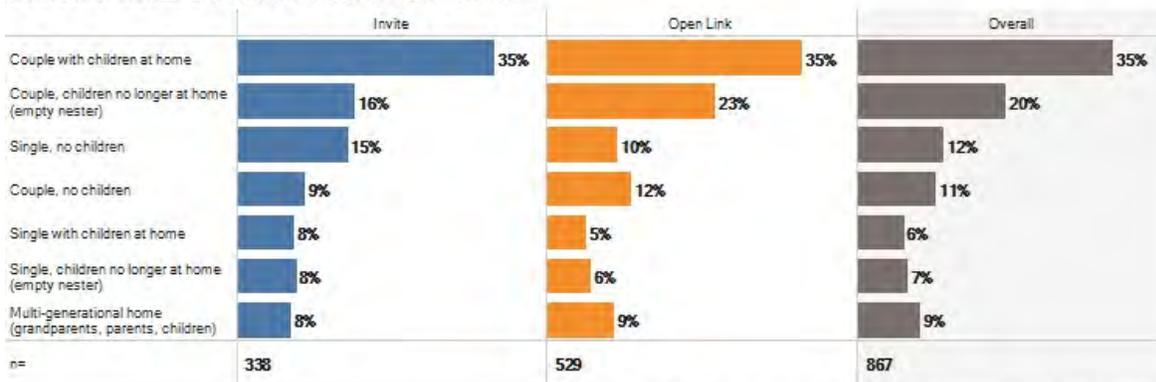


*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample
Source: RRC Associates

Household Makeup

Most respondents are couples and 35% of the Invite sample are couples with children at home. Overall, 9% of respondents live in a multi-generational home, showing a need to cater facilities and programs to all age ranges.

Q 23: Which of these categories best applies to your household?



*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

Voter Registration Status, Dog Ownership & Residence Ownership

Q 24: Do you own or rent your residence?



Q 25: Does your household have a need for ADA-accessible (Americans with Disabilities) facilities and services?



Q 26: Do you or a member of your household own a dog?



*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

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Ethnicity & Race

Q 27: Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin?



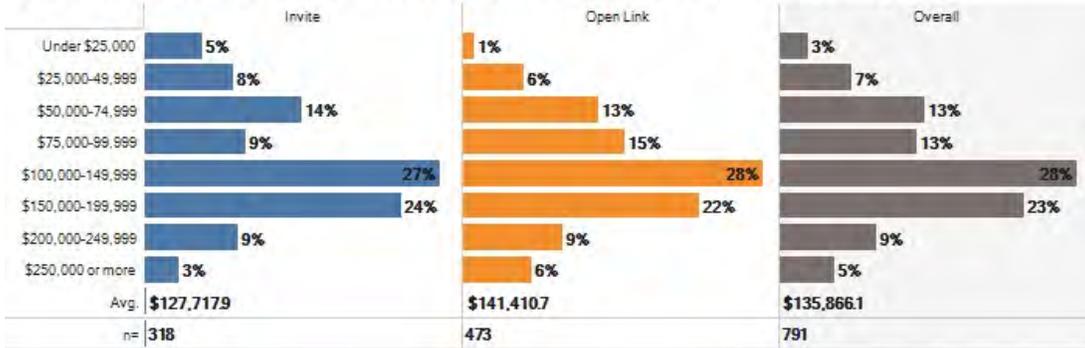
*Ratings categories are sorted in descending order by the average rating of the invite sample.
Source: RRC Associates

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Income

Respondents are relatively affluent. Invite respondents earn an average of \$127,717 a year with Open link respondents earning slightly more.

Q 29: Which of these categories best describes the total gross annual income of your household (before taxes)?



*Rating categories are sorted in descending order by Invite sample
Source: RRC Associates

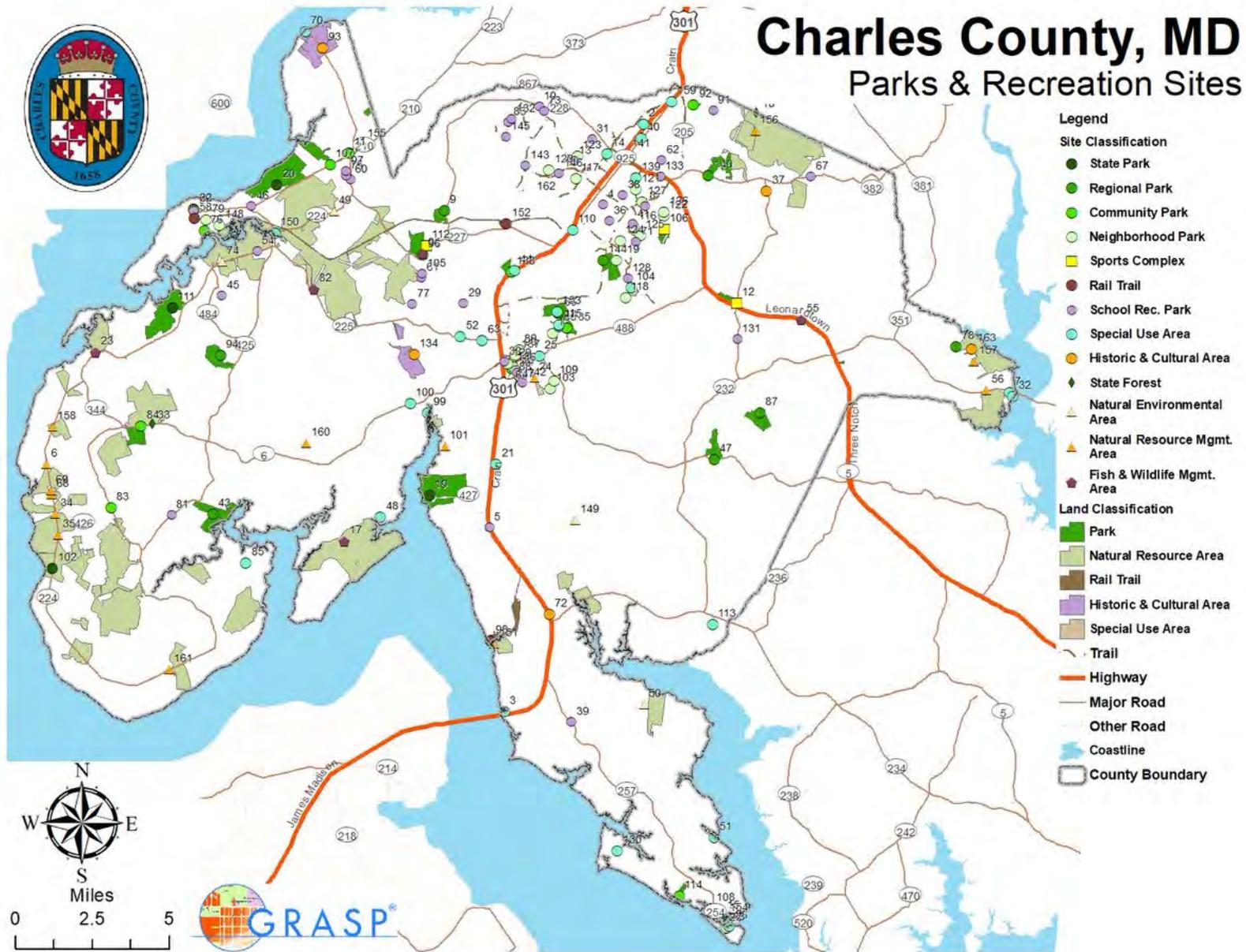
Comments/Suggestions

At the end of the survey, respondents were given the opportunity to provide any additional comments about recreational activities, facilities, and programs in Charles County. A random selection of verbatim responses is shown below. See Appendix for full listing of comments provided.

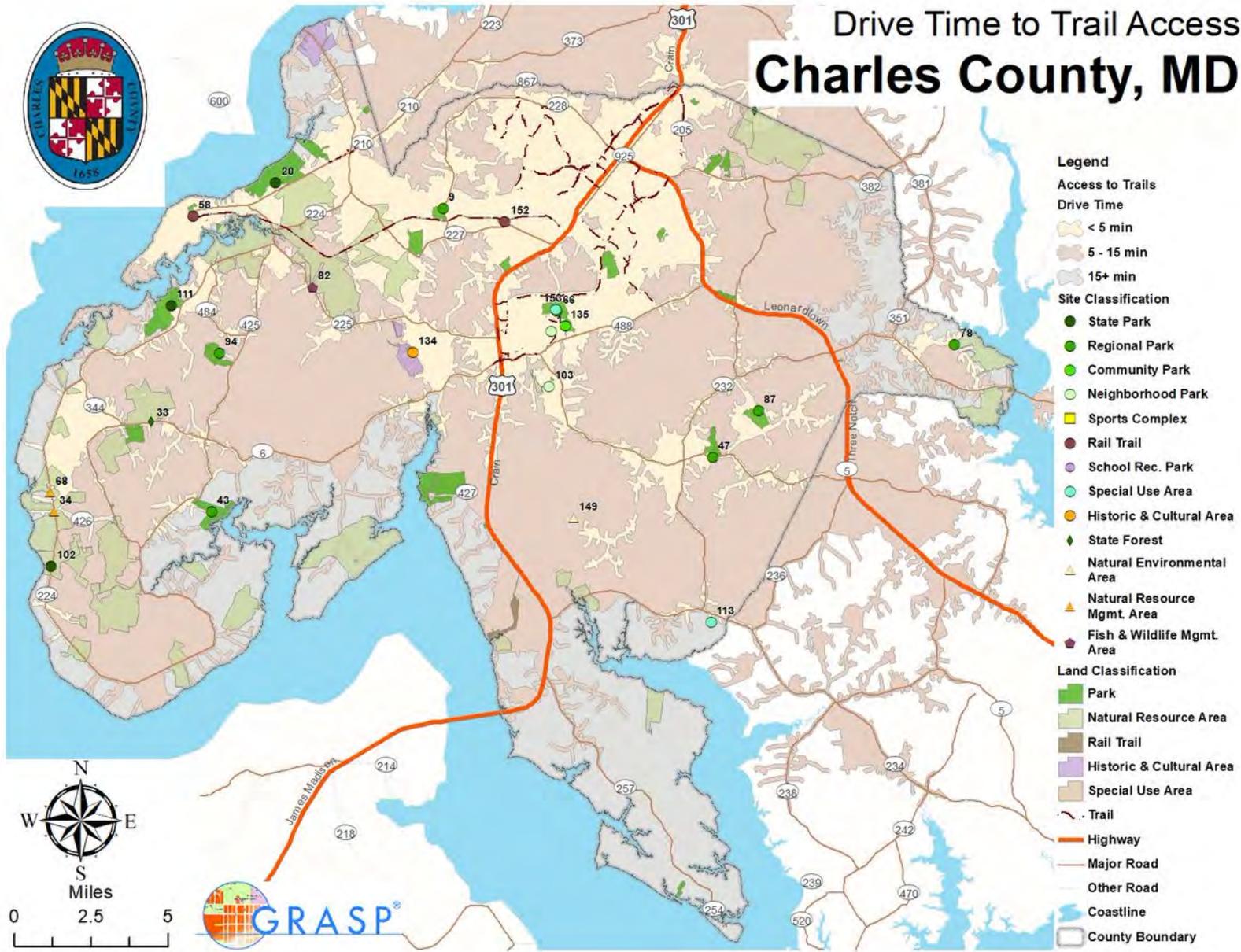
- Would support an indoor facility large enough to accommodate softball and baseball fields to play year-round.
- I have been a resident for over 36 years, and I love all your facilities and activities. Thanks!
- What is most important to me is preservation of existing natural and cultural resources. I enjoy public hiking trails that preserve such resources, while also providing a recreational benefit to the community.
- Organized sports leagues and recreational and gathering opportunities for active older adults (60+).
- Please add more dog parks and picnic areas to host private gatherings.
- I wish there were more places and activities for singles to meet.
- More advertising of what recertification spaces are available and the cost; More garden spaces; more walking trails; improved upkeep of major highways and entrances into Charles County.



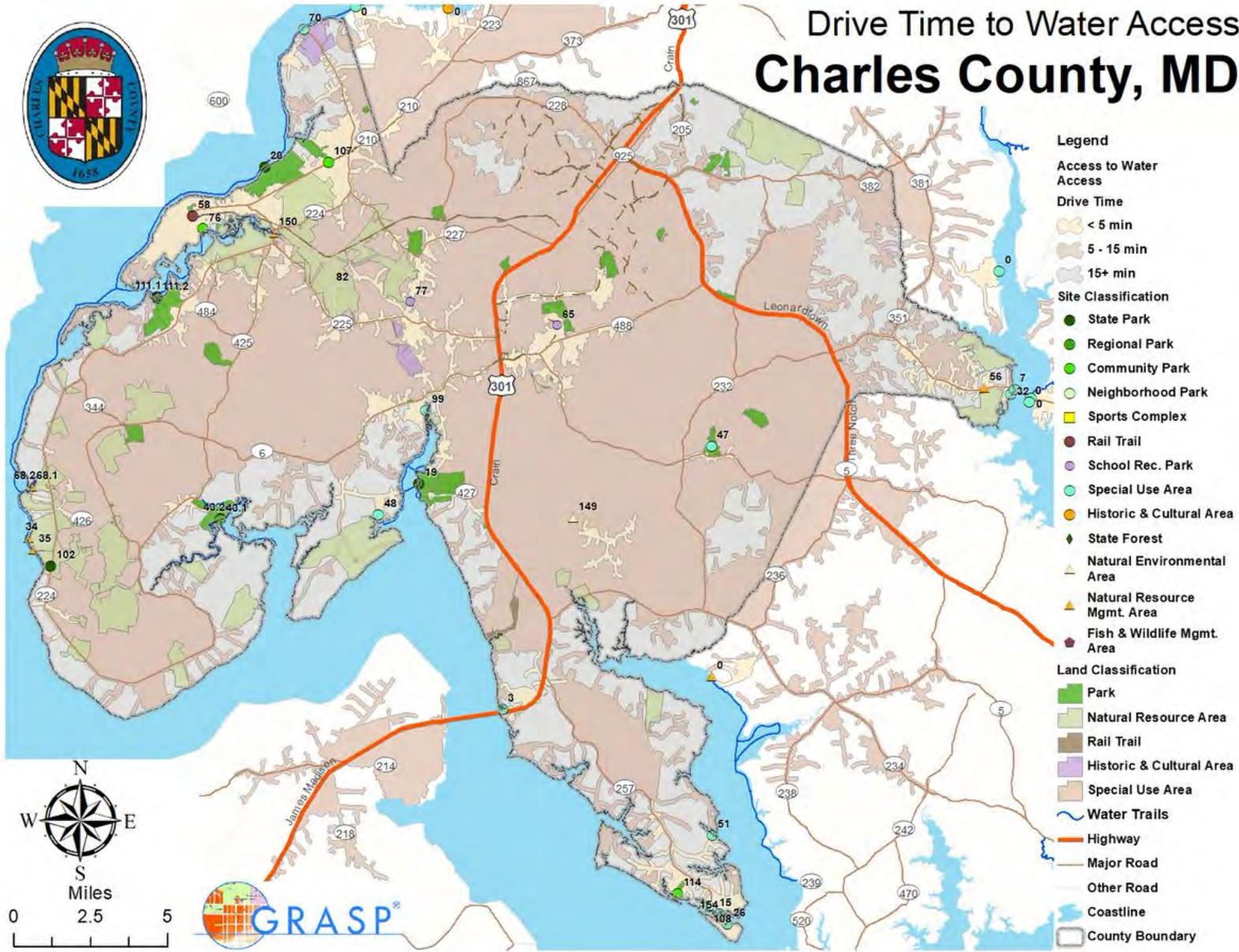
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Drive Time to Trail Access Charles County, MD

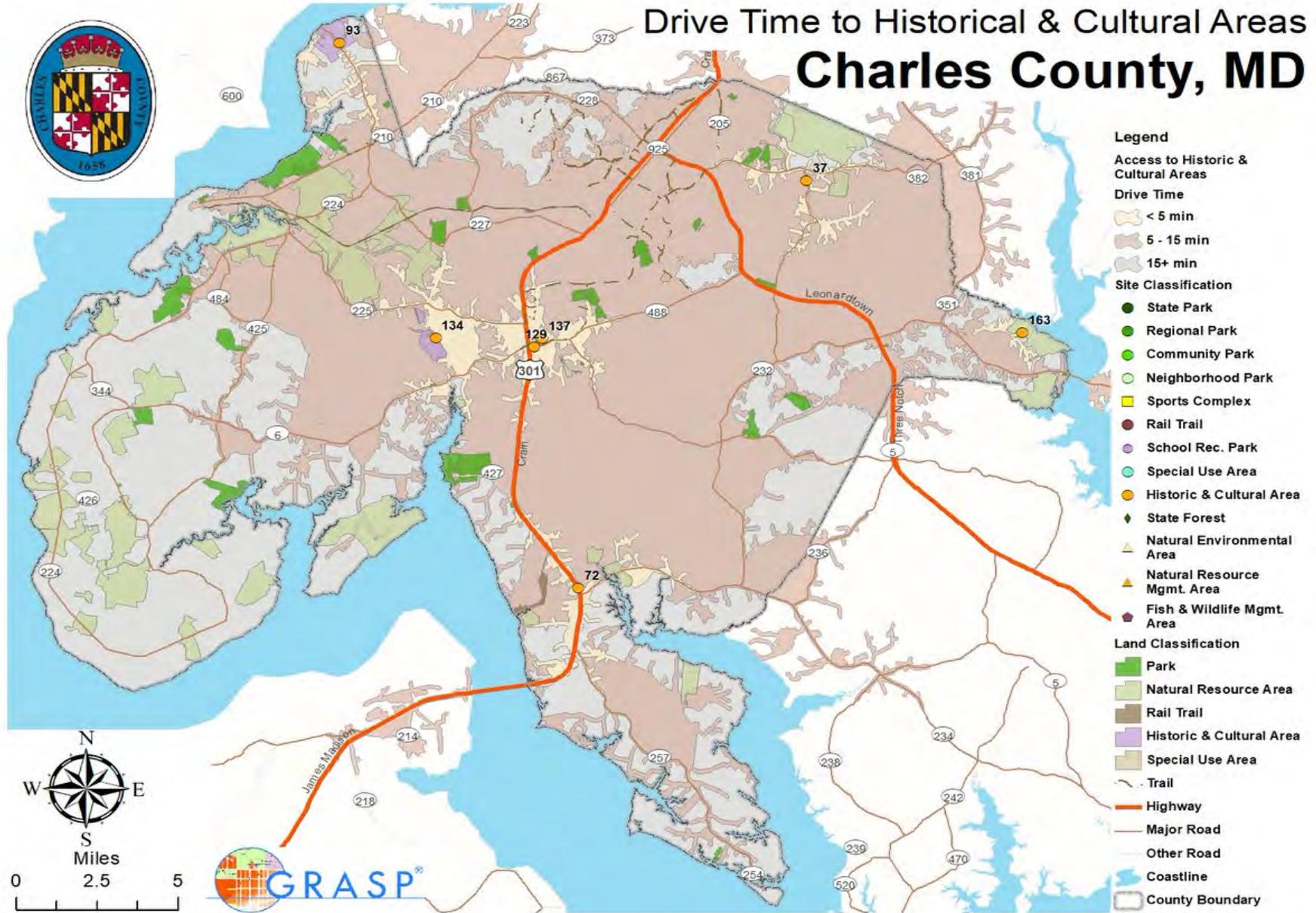


Drive Time to Water Access Charles County, MD



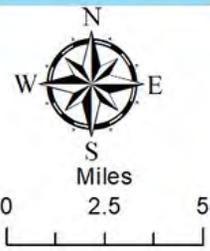
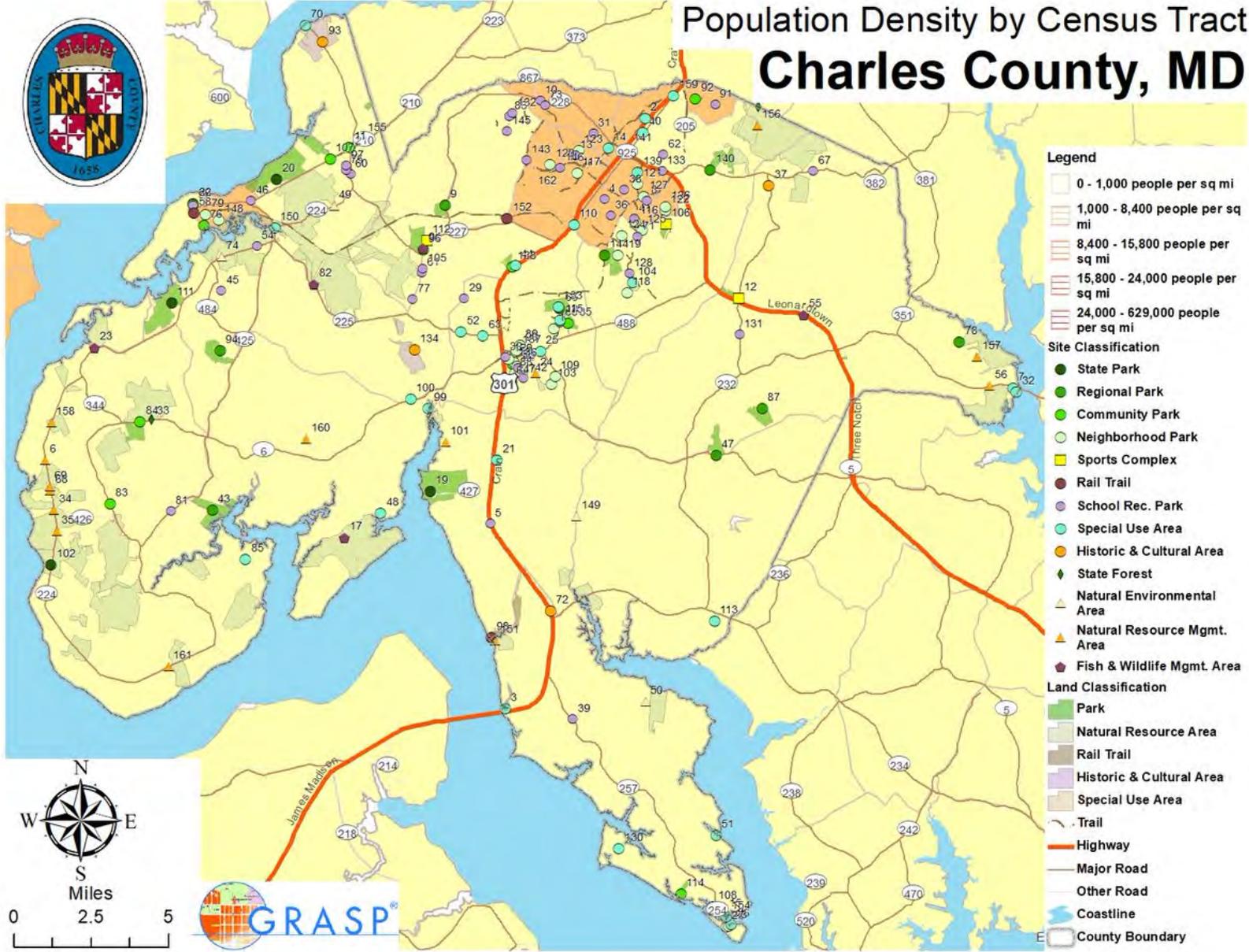


Drive Time to Historical & Cultural Areas Charles County, MD



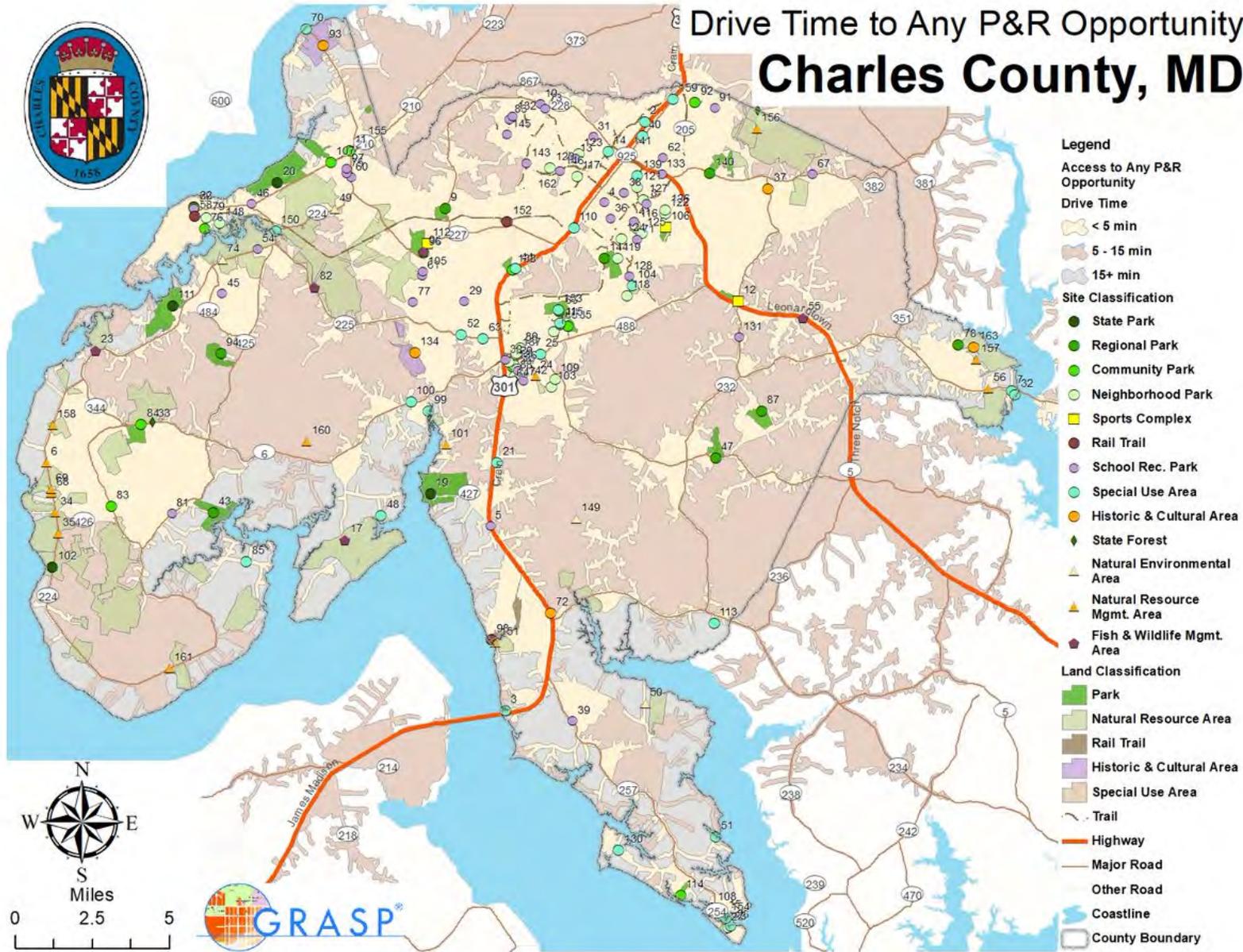


Population Density by Census Tract Charles County, MD

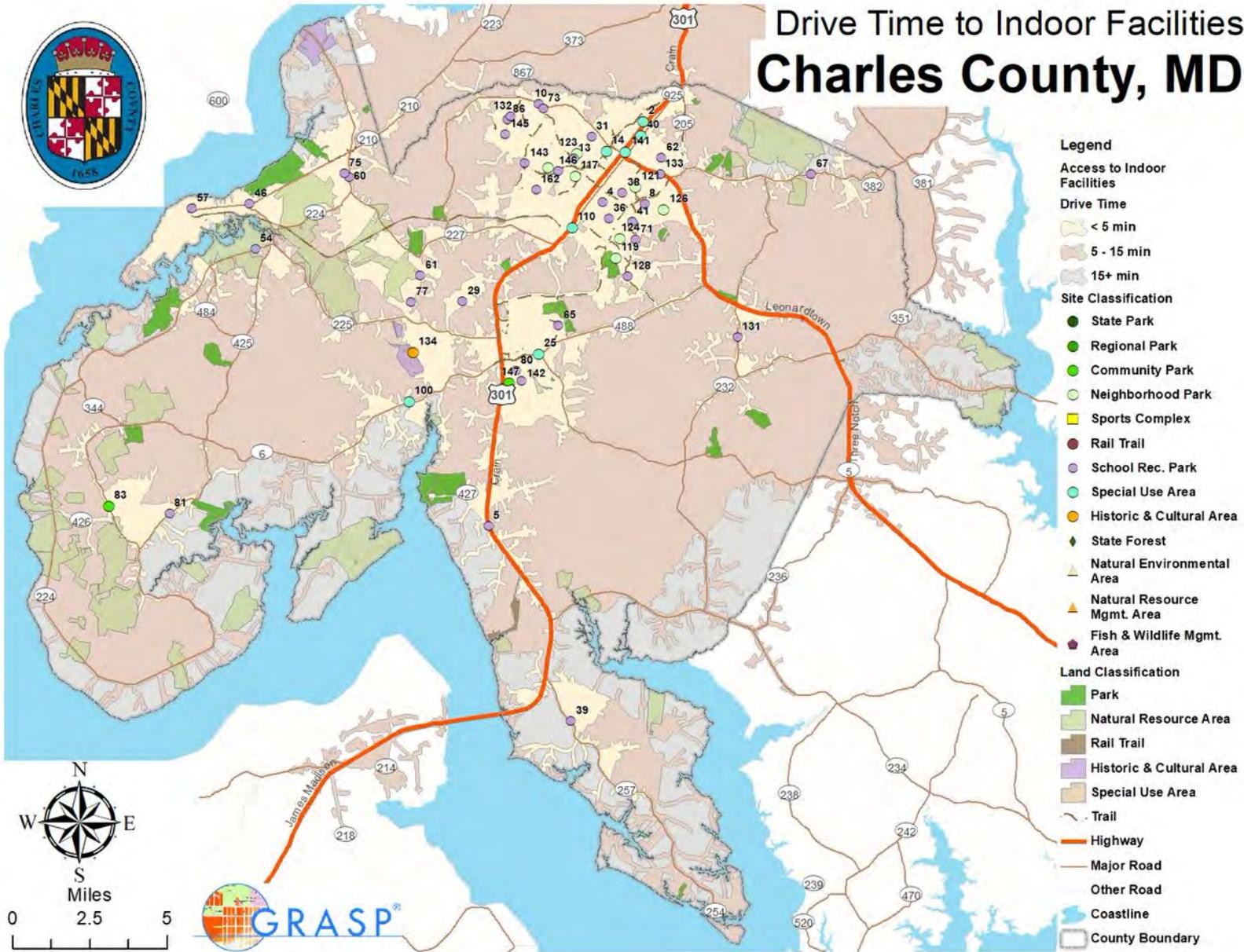




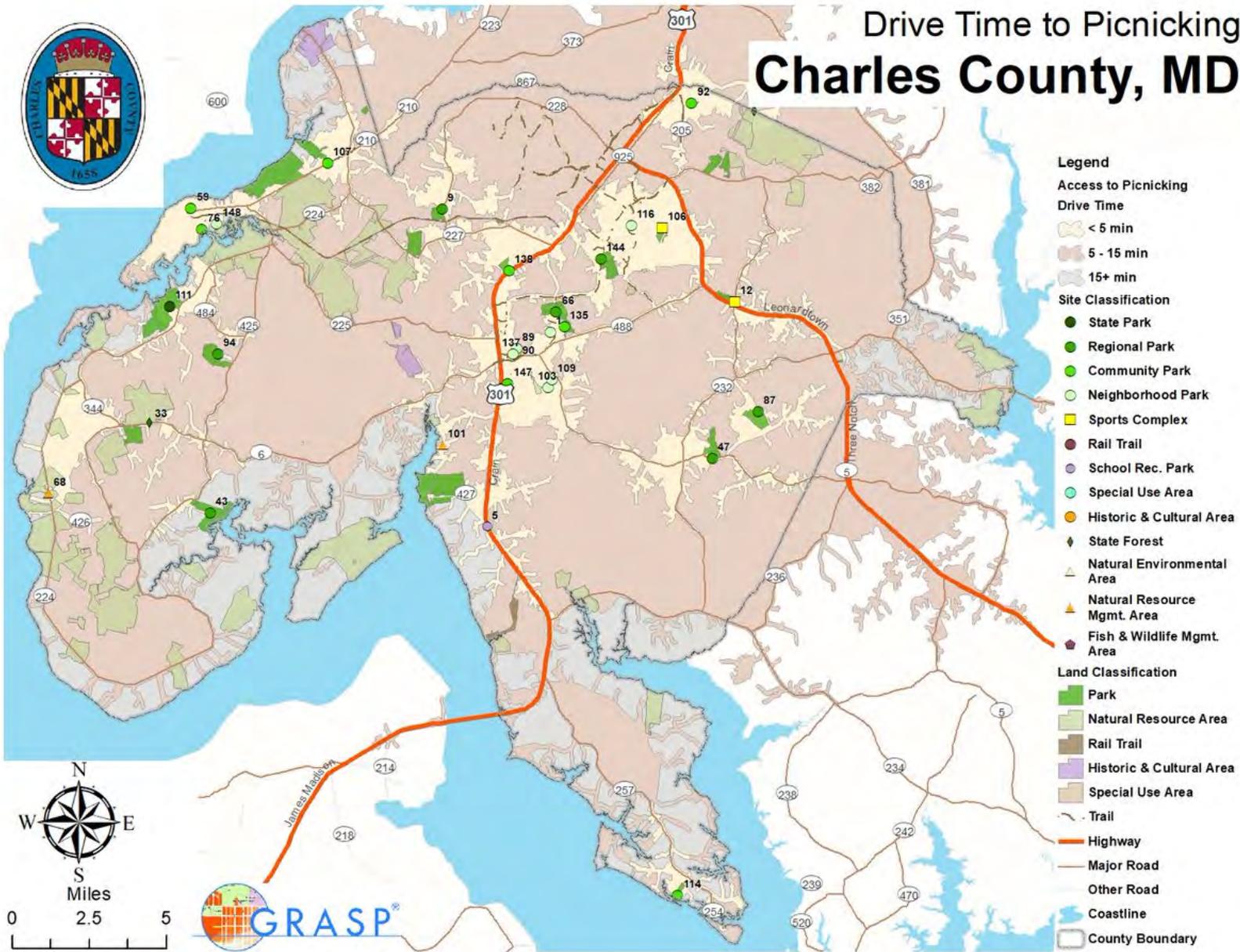
Drive Time to Any P&R Opportunity Charles County, MD



Drive Time to Indoor Facilities Charles County, MD

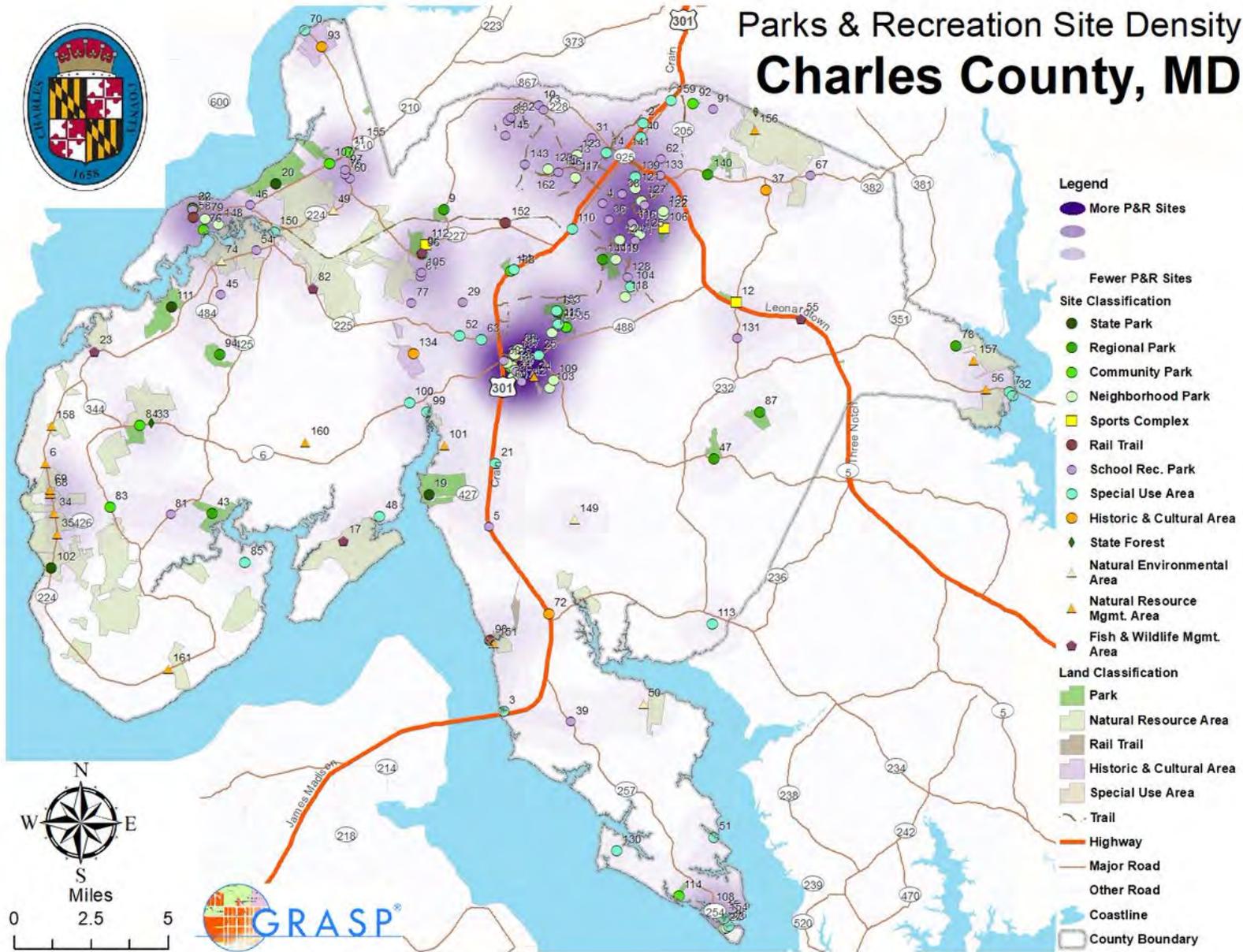


Drive Time to Picnicking Charles County, MD

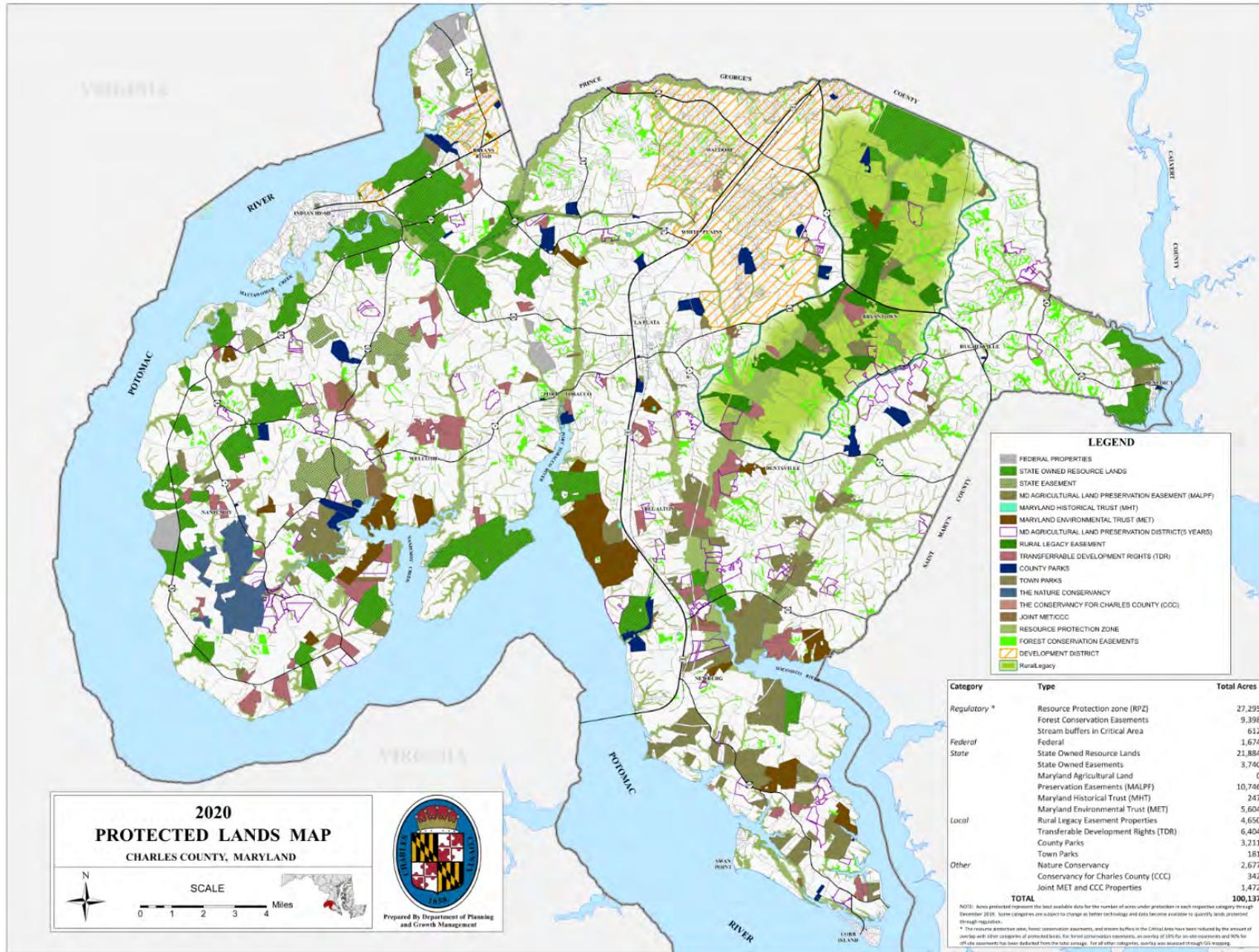




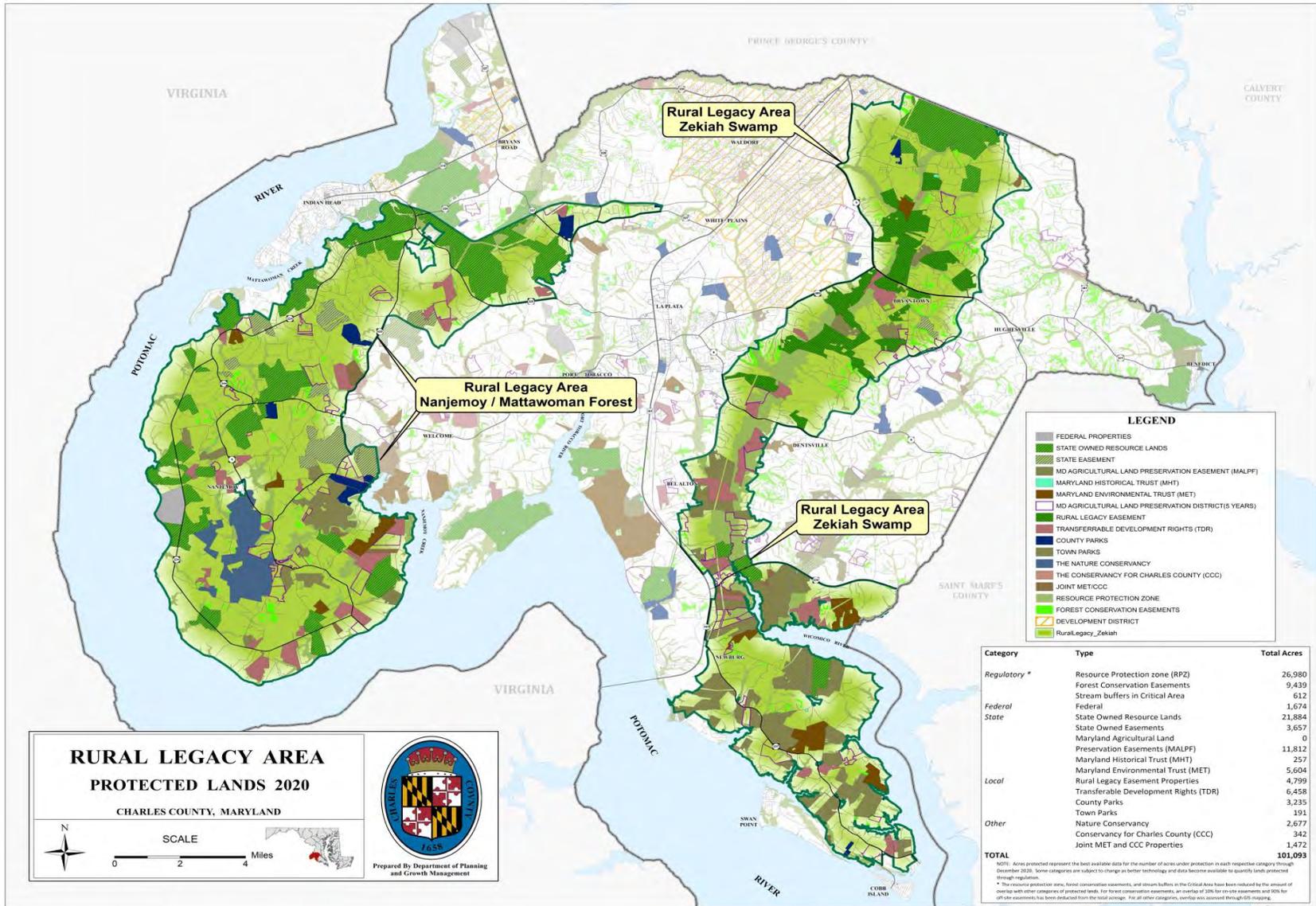
Parks & Recreation Site Density Charles County, MD



Map 23: Charles County Protected Lands 2020



Map 24: Charles County Rural Legacy Area- Protected Lands 2020



Source: Charles County Department of Planning and Growth Management